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Wesley Nelson

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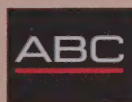
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EDITORIAL ENGAGEMENT FOR BRANDS
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editorial

For one day only

On 3 December last, I found myself wondering what the International Day of Disabled People – or is it the International Day for Persons with Disabilities – is actually for.

Its primary purpose this year seemed to be to act as a reason (or excuse?) for the launching of initiatives which would have happened anyway. The Metropolitan Police chose that day to call for people to join their new advisory group on disability; but presumably, with the forthcoming demise of Police Authorities, this is something they would have had to do some time anyway. The Government similarly marked the day by announcing changes in the provision of support for those of us lucky enough to be in employment; this again would have come out at some other time.

Did the fact that this day came and went mean anything to disabled people in snow-bound Britain? Did it have any direct impact on the lives of those who were trying to cope with sub-zero temperatures, unable to leave the house because of conditions which could only exacerbate existing

mobility difficulties, and wondering whether they could actually afford to run the heating all day?

“The Government similarly marked the day by announcing changes in the provision of support for those of us lucky enough to be in employment”

Were there hordes of non-disabled people, other than paid PAs, paid or unpaid carers or generally considerate neighbours who were prompted by the existence of the International Day of Disabled People to nip down the street to see whether their local disabled resident needs anything from the supermarket?

It's not, I don't think, over cynical of me to guess that the answer is probably no.

So why bother? Surely, the fact that people feel it necessary to observe such a day simply serves to point up the fact that we as a group continue to be viewed as separate and are still not integrated into or fully accepted by societies we live in.

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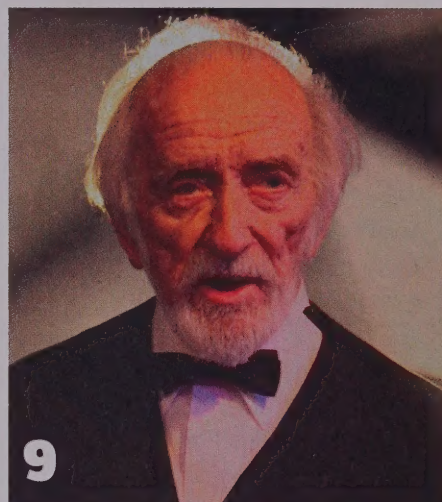
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JAMIE TROUNCE

JAMIE TROUNCE

Legal clarity tops Falconer agenda



Left-leaning think tank Demos has appointed the chair of its commission of enquiry into assisted suicide. Here Lord Falconer talks to **Ian Macrae** about his motivation

The former Labour Lord Chancellor, Lord [Charlie] Falconer (*pictured*) might well be seen by some as a natural shoe-in as Chair of a commission of enquiry into the complex issues surrounding assisted suicide. After all, as we both agree, he has form in this area.

In July 2009, his amendment to the Coroners and Justice bill was rejected by the House of Lords, not least, in the face of considerable, emotional and vociferous opposition by the disabled cross-bench peer Baroness Campbell of Surbiton. That amendment proposed changing the law to explicitly allow someone to assist another to commit suicide, albeit subject to a battery of what were presented as safeguards and caveats.

Lord Falconer himself is very clear on his motivation both for presenting the amendment and for his showing continued interest in the subject by accepting the chairmanship

of the commission.

"I became involved to start with focussing particularly on the legal position. It had become clear that, unusually, you had this very serious law that wasn't being enforced. Now, the mainstream view on constitutional law is that you get prosecuted if you've done something. But here we have a situation where the law is explicitly not being applied to its full extent."

He clarifies what he means by referring to recent cases involving trips to Switzerland's Dignitas clinic.

"It's an offence to help anybody in any way to commit suicide. So we've seen Dignitas cases where family members take loved ones from Britain to Switzerland where it's lawful to commit suicide. The taking of the loved one is a criminal offence in Britain, punishable by a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison. But the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has produced guidelines setting out when he will prosecute and when he will not. So we have a law, and a very serious law which is not being enforced. It's a decision in the discretion of a high and worthy official

but nevertheless, an official, not a decision subject to law."

And this situation, says Lord Falconer raises a whole raft of questions and views.

"Have we got the law wrong? Is this the place to leave it?

"Some people say you should change the law to reflect what is and is not acceptable as a matter for criminal prosecution. Other people say that, even though the law doesn't reflect what happens, having the threat of the law in the background is

what protects vulnerable people."

When Kier Starmer, the DPP decided that he was not going to change the existing law (which makes assisting suicide a criminal offence), his announcement was welcomed by activists and allies who see this position as the safest way of protecting the very lives of disabled people who might otherwise be threatened by decisions made by others, doctors or family members who might have their own views, reasons or, indeed

prejudices to guide them in deciding to end a life.

Here there is a belief that any change to that law would represent a serious erosion of the right to protection. Lord Falconer's view is that this is a central matter for his commission.

"We need to examine that, and in particular we need to examine what is the impact on disabled people of the current practical approach which is now taken. What is the effect of there being a direct statement by the DPP that

it is not going to lead to prosecution if you help someone to commit suicide."

Moreover, he questions the universality among disabled people of the view that no change to the law is the only way forward.

"What you describe as the view of disabled people is expressed very strongly by a large number both of disabled people and organisations speaking for the disabled. But it is not the exclusive view of disabled people. There are others who take a contrary view."

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
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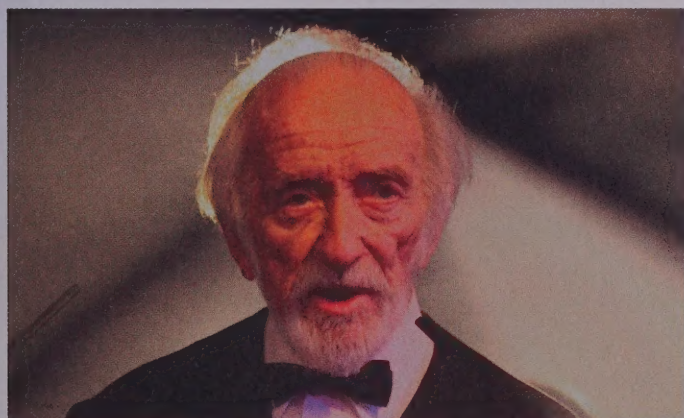
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On our RADAR: people of the year

Annie Makoff

RADAR, the UK's largest disability campaigning organisation, hosted their annual People of the Year Awards at Battersea Evolution at the end of November.

The ceremony saw the likes of Baroness Jane Campbell and



NOBLE VICTORY: Wycliffe Noble, winner of the Person of the Year Award 2010. Architect Wycliffe has promoted disability access for over 40 years and has played a leading role in the International Technical Aids and Access Commission.



CAST CREDIT: Channel 4's *Cast Offs* team collect the Fictional Media Award for their breakthrough drama series which followed six disabled characters in a fictional reality TV show.

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson rub shoulders with Britain's top disabled model Shannon Murray and actress Genevieve Barr, among others.

The award categories included Disabled Person of the Year, Arts Award, Care and Support Award and Accessibility Provider of the Year.



PROUD DAY: Arts Award winner, Lizzie Emeh (centre) collects her award for writing, recording and releasing her own album *Loud and Proud* into the mainstream industry.



DRESSED TO KILL: The *How to Look Good Naked...with a difference* team are awarded the Factual Media Award for their three-part series which tackled issues around fashion and disability for disabled women.

Other winners included: Ealing Centre for Independent Living, winner of the Care and Support Award; Lucy Hodges, winner of the Lloyds Banking Group Sports Award; the Disability Hate Crime Network, winners of the Crime Prosecution Service Stop Hate Award; Arsenal FC's Disability Liaison Team, winner of the Shaw Trust Accessibility Provider of the Year Award; and Nadeem Badshah, Young Person of the Year Award.



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Rapkyns Care Home, Horsham	01403 265096
Upper Mead, Henfield	01273 492870

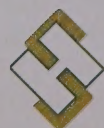
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Aids trade probe announced



Sunil Peck

Campaigners have welcomed an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) into the mobility aids market.

The investigation is set to begin in early 2011 and will look at whether people buying equipment including wheelchairs, scooters, stair lifts, bath aids, hoists and adjustable beds have access to relevant information, and also look at the treatment

they receive from retailers.

The OFT is inviting disabled people to contact them before the investigation begins with comments and views on what issues are particularly important.

Consumer Direct, the OFT's advice service, received nearly five thousand calls in 2009 relating to the market which it said represented a 20 per cent increase on the previous year. Concerns have

also been expressed in the media and elsewhere that the sector is not working well for consumers, leading to higher prices and less choice as well as consumers purchasing products that do not meet their needs.

John Fingleton, Chief Executive of the OFT, said: "Increasing complaints and the wide nature of the concerns make it appropriate for us to examine this sector and consider whether there is potential for improvements on a consumer or competition level, or both."

Alan Norton, Chief Executive of Assist UK, which leads a network of disabled living centres offering advice on independent living equipment, said that disabled people did not always receive advice to enable them to make well-informed decisions when buying equipment.

He said: "You can go into a shop and they might just want to sell you what they have, even though it might not be what's suitable for you. Sometimes retailers just aren't aware of the range of products available to disabled people."

He said that the need for a fairer market was even more important in the light of the difficulties being

faced by 45 disabled living centres, seven of which were under threat of closure when *Disability Now* went to press.

Sue Bott (*pictured*), Director of the National Centre for Independent Living, said that she knew of cases where people had been sold equipment that was not suitable for them.

She added that the industry had been getting away with charging high prices for equipment for too long.

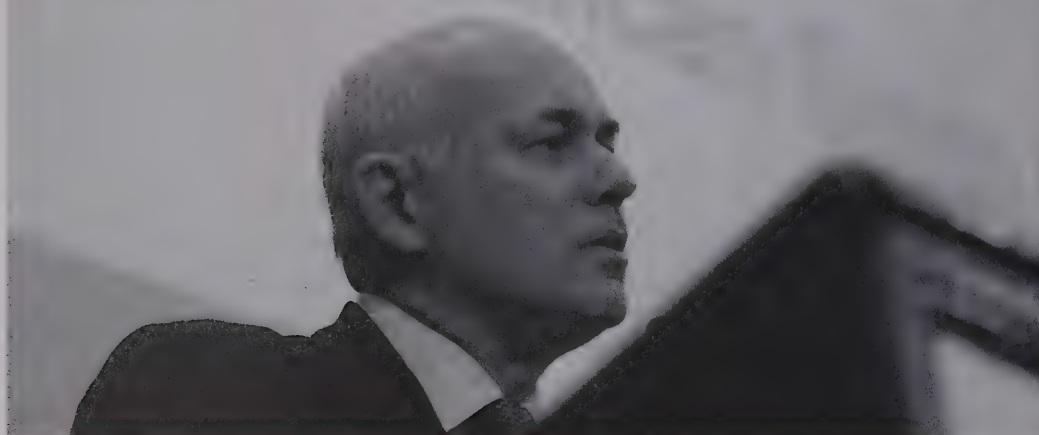
She said: "I hope the investigation demystifies the market which would benefit from a lot more competition and transparency. The market needs to become mainstream rather than remaining secretive. It would also benefit from more involvement from disabled people in the design of products."

Commenting on the OFT investigation, Christine Shaw, Chief Executive of the Disability Living Foundation, said: "Although most retailers are reputable, there are still some companies who apply tactics such as pressure selling to often vulnerable people."

Responses are being accepted until 10 January 2011.

• For more information visit oft.gov.uk/news-and-updates/press/2010/120-10

One for the money



As his Welfare Reform Bill makes its way through Parliament, **Ruth Patrick** asks, is Iain Duncan Smith's Universal Credit a simple or simplistic solution

We are all well acquainted with the politician's lie or half-truth: the promises they make in their clamour to get and stay elected which turn out to contain rather more fiction than fact.

Step forward Iain Duncan Smith (IDS), Minister for the Department of Work and Pensions, who is on a reforming quest to wipe out the "sin" of worklessness. He blithely promises "there will be no losers" from his planned Universal Credit, which will roll many out-of-work benefits and in-work tax credits into one single

benefit. Is this yet another instance of fiction and politically palatable rhetoric taking precedence over the facts?

IDS's Universal Credit will be phased in from 2013, and is due to be debated in Parliament this month as one key element of the Welfare Reform Bill. The rationale for the reforms is simple. The multitude of welfare benefits and tax credits has created an unwieldy and overly-complex system. People struggle to identify which benefits they are entitled to, and find it even harder to work out if they would

be financially better off moving into paid work.

Many benefit claimants face a punitive rate of benefit withdrawal when they do make the transition into employment – meaning that they see very little extra money from their hard work.

The Universal Credit will change all this, IDS confidently asserts. By replacing many benefits, including Employment and Support Allowance (income-based), Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, with one single payment, a meaningful simplification of benefits will be achieved. As people move into work, Universal Credit will be withdrawn at a single rate of 65%, ensuring that individuals keep 35p of

every extra pound they earn.

Whilst this attempt at simplification should be welcomed, a large number of benefits will remain outside of Universal Credit – suggesting that much complexity will endure. Further, the reforms could be cynically used as a cover to drive the level of benefits down yet further, with housing benefit's incorporation looking particularly suspect in this regard.

Fundamentally, there are two ways that IDS's messianic objective to improve work incentives can be achieved – either you increase the rewards attached to paid employment or reduce the level of support offered to those dependent on state welfare. Evidence from the Coalition so far suggests they firmly favour the latter approach. Just think of the eye-watering proposals to cut the welfare bill by £18 billion, and compare with the stark absence of pledges to increase the minimum wage. Set against this backdrop, the Universal Credit starts to look like one more way for the Government to push people off welfare and into work. If I were a gambling woman, I'd lay a hefty wager that IDS's promise will be found wanting when losers in their thousands start to emerge from these reforms.



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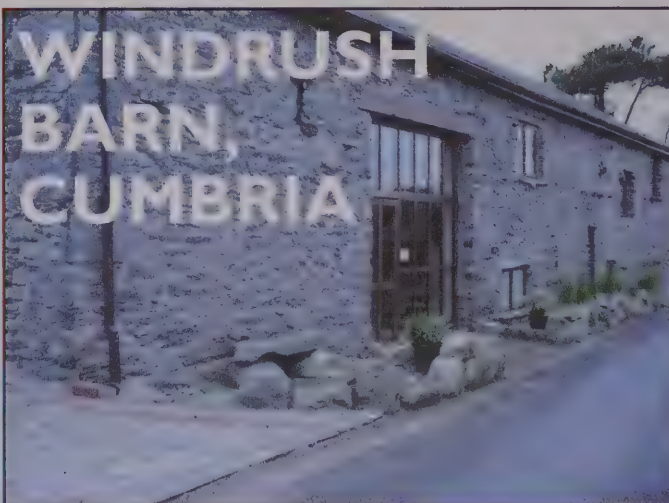


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disabilityrights

Clarke tips the scales of justice

The Government has been strongly criticised over plans to make drastic reductions to eligibility for access to legal aid.

Under proposals outlined in a new green paper, the Ministry of Justice plans to remove whole areas of the law from the legal aid system, including benefit appeals, SEN, medical negligence and employment discrimination; areas where disabled people are often disproportionately affected.

Justice Secretary Ken Clarke said that he strongly believed that access to justice was "the hallmark of a civilised society".

"But at more than £2 billion each year, we currently have one of the most expensive legal aid systems in the world. This cannot continue," he said.

"The proposals I have outlined suggest clear,



New Government plans to reform legal aid may hit disabled people seeking justice, says **Paul Carter**

tough choices to ensure access to public funding in those cases that really require it, the protection of the most vulnerable in society and the efficient performance of the justice system."

Disability organisations reacted angrily to the proposals. Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive of disability organisation Scope, said that if implemented, the plans would leave many disabled people without recourse to challenge decisions.

He said: "The benefits system is notoriously

complex and prone to administrative error. It is hard to see how measures that lead to a decrease in the availability of legal aid will help disabled people to better hold decision-makers to account for their actions.

"In an era of budget cuts and job losses, what now happens to disabled people who fall foul of public and private bureaucracies? The courts have traditionally been the last line of defence against poor, unfair and unlawful decisions."

According to the green paper, disabled people will be able to get alternative

legal support and advice from charities and support organisations such as Disability Alliance, Age UK and the Child Poverty Action Group.

However, Neil Coyle, Chief Executive of Disability Alliance, has written to the Government demanding an apology, calling that claim "factually incorrect and extremely misleading".

He said: "As a simple courtesy it would have been preferable if you had discussed inclusion of this comment in advance of publication. It is factually incorrect and extremely misleading.

"The implication that charities like Disability Alliance are available to help people in the advent of legal aid cuts misrepresents the reality that we do not provide such support. We are very concerned that this statement has been included and are keen to see it withdrawn as soon as possible."

The consultation runs until 14 February 2011, although it is restricted to what the Ministry of Justice calls "providers of publicly funded legal services and others with an interest in the justice system".

It is hard to see how measures that lessen the availability of legal aid will help disabled people to hold decision-makers to account

mediawatch



JAMIE TROUNCE

No bar to TV talent

Recent shows featuring disabled people and characters may have given actress **Genevieve Barr** hope, but they've also raised questions and dilemmas for her

I grew up in a middle class family, went to private school and so it was always expected of me that I would become a lawyer, a doctor, a banker, go into a trade that was

safe and prosperous. Acting was seen as risky, self-indulgent and an infantile dream. Being deaf tipped the scales even further against me, and it simply wasn't an option.

John Thaw (pictured right) was one of my favourite actors on television in the nineties. I loved his rough and grumpy demeanour, his quick-fire wit. Reading his biography recently left me admiring him all the more – that he stayed true to who he was; an authentic working class actor. In the 1950s, working class men were expected to work at the docks, the mines, the factories. Not act. Acting was a form of leisure.

When you look at the history of television, you see working class actors breaking the mould in the 1960s, followed by women, those of mixed race and homosexuals. I recognise that the battles are still ongoing in these categories and the fight is definitely still in its early days for disabled actors.

I remember reading an article in *Disability Now* about Kiruna Stamell, who played Carrie in *Cast Offs*. "I'm not disabled," she said, "I'm short". It made me laugh, in a good way. I wonder if I should say the same thing, "I'm not disabled, I'm deaf". Disability is so diverse, and we all tend to get lumped into the same category. Perhaps the way forward for mainstream television is to recognise us all as individuals. Certainly, that's how I want to be judged – as a brilliant



COURTESY OF ITV

John Thaw was one of my favourite actors on television in the nineties. I loved his rough and grumpy demeanour, his quick-fire wit

actress, an individual who just happens to be deaf.

However, does it weaken our fight and negatively impact on the progress to be made, if we don't all fight under the "disability" banner?

I have a lot of respect for disability-centric programmes, such as *Cast Offs* and *The Silence* which I did earlier this year. It was a fascinating subject to explore – the conflict about cochlea implants and the struggle to deal with parents who saw your impairment as a tragedy. But then, these programmes are still so rare and also, from the view of an actor, if these are the only roles

available for disabled actors then the opportunities that come round are still very few. So do we sit and wait? Isn't it better to get disabled people in non-disabled roles, so disability becomes a non-issue in the casting?

It's a catch-22 situation.

Let me explain this. I have never hidden my disability. I have never worn my hair down to hide my hearing aids, or stayed quiet as a mouse to reduce attention to my deaf voice. But I now do speech therapy three times a week, so that I can sound more hearing. If I

sound hearing, then I become more acceptable to play hearing roles. Where I can develop my acting skills, and have a successful career because I'm good at it. My dream. But then I think of my role models like John Thaw – who instead went the other way – celebrated his difference and made it workable in television. Or Kiruna, who said "I'm short, so what?" She doesn't put on a pair of platforms and pretend to be tall.

I feel a bit of a coward. And perhaps fortunate that my disability is one where, if

I work hard enough, I can make it hidden. Not everybody has that option.

When will disability be accepted as normal, and/or engaging and interesting to watch? When will producers and directors either embrace disability as adding a unique element to their programme, or consider it irrelevant and a non-barrier to making high-class television?

I'm optimistic that with the calibre and number of programmes that we have seen on television more recently, the wait isn't going to be too much longer. But

we need more people on the sidelines. More people in production crews, more writers who continue to tackle and explore disability and more people who recognise that disability is not the central element to a disabled person's life.

I play rugby. I am a terrible cook. I like cheesy films. My interests haven't been determined by my disability, and nor has my passion for acting. Give disabled actors a chance to show you what they have to offer. We all have a right to follow our dreams.

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politics

Review faults flawed benefit assessments

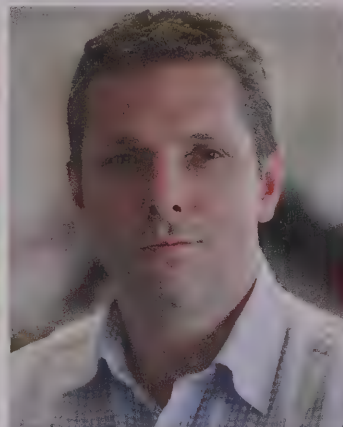
The Harrington review on the much criticised Work Capability Assessment has brought a welcome from the Government, restrained rather than enthusiastic and, says **Sunil Peck**, mixed responses from elsewhere

The coalition Government has said that it is delighted to fully endorse recommendations to make the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), a fairer and more effective means of determining eligibility to unemployment benefit for disabled people.

But campaigners, who have broadly welcomed the review, nevertheless have warned that unemployed disabled people will continue to be unfairly assessed and will be wrongly assessed as being fit for work, while others will lose out on additional support to find work. Some others argue that the review's findings are a straw in the wind, the first indication that the Government's approach to welfare reform may be starting to unravel or at least be fundamentally flawed.

The independent review is the first of five statutory annual reviews of the WCA and was carried out by Professor Malcolm Harrington, an occupational health specialist.

Professor Harrington



From left to right: Chris Grayling; Neil Coyle and Richard Hawkes

found that the assessment which decides whether someone will receive Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is failing because questionnaires are "lengthy" and sometimes difficult or impossible to fill in, and that assessments fail people with fluctuating conditions because they rely on stock questions such as whether or not a claimant can load a washing machine.

The review has put forward 25 recommendations including the introduction of mental health specialists in medical assessment centres to spread good practice; reducing reliance on the medical assessments and

giving more power to job centre staff; improving communications and the level of support provided to those who undergo a WCA and ensuring the medical assessment is transparent by, subject to an initial pilot, recording all assessments.

The Minister for Employment Chris Grayling said that Professor Harrington's review was a "crucial" step to helping thousands of people into work.

He said: "It's in everyone's interest that we get the WCA right and Professor Harrington's recommendations will make the assessment fairer and more effective."

The coalition Government has not set a timetable for

the implementation of the recommendations, but only a few of them are expected to be in place by this April when people currently claiming Incapacity Benefit will be reassessed at a rate of ten thousand a week.

Dr Mark Baker, Co-Chair of the Disability Benefits Consortium, said: "The extent of the review's recommendations clearly indicate that the current WCA process is deeply flawed and the Government needs to make sure that, once they have implemented the recommendations, these issues are fully resolved.

They should not proceed with moving claimants of older incapacity benefits onto ESA, via the WCA, until it is clear that the

Assessments fail people with fluctuating conditions because they rely on stock questions such as whether or not a claimant can load a washing machine

assessment is working fairly and effectively."

Neil Coyle, Director of Policy at Disability Alliance, said that the coalition Government's response would not reassure disabled

people that the system would be made fairer because of a desire in the DWP to cut the number of ESA claimants.

Commenting on the uncertainty over how long the Government might take to implement the recommendations, he said: "Thousands of disabled people will remain inadequately served by the test and inappropriately directed to insufficient support. Costs to taxpayers will continue to rise through high numbers of avoidable appeals and DWP incurring

avoidable costs."

Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive of Scope, said that he hoped that the recommendations would increase disabled people's confidence in the WCA.

But he added: "Disabled people face a myriad of barriers to employment, from practical to social and psychological. We urge Professor Harrington to make it his priority to look

at how the WCA takes into consideration all of these barriers and therefore give a more accurate representation of someone's likelihood to get a job."

Professor Harrington will carry out the second review of the WCA this year and has pledged to look at issues including how it tests people with fluctuating conditions.

→ Have your say

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worldviewroundup

EUROPE

Caged: institutions of shame



JUHA SOMPINIEMI

According to the European Council's Commissioner for Human Rights, too many disabled people on the Continent continue to be kept in degrading and segregated conditions in residential institutions.

Writing on his blog, Thomas Hammarburg says: *"In Europe today, thousands of people with disabilities are still kept in large, segregated and often remote institutions. In some cases they live in substandard conditions, suffering abject neglect and severe human rights abuses. In too many cases, premature deaths are not investigated or even reported. Caged beds and other restraints are still used [and] there is an atmosphere of impunity."*

Bulgaria in particular is

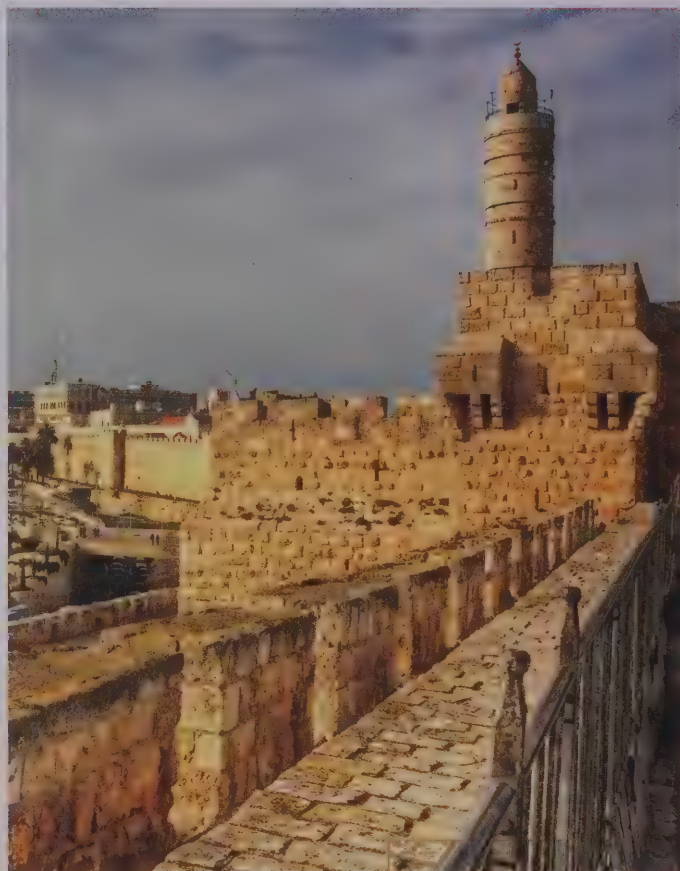
highlighted. Its Prosecutor General has apparently initiated criminal investigations into 166 deaths and 30 more cases of abuse of children living in state homes for young people with mental disabilities.

The Commissioner describes as "not acceptable" the fact that people still routinely have their legal capacity removed and are deprived of their liberty without this being subject to judicial review.

While recognising some advances towards independent living in Albania, Macedonia and Serbia, he goes on to say that "since several European countries still lack a system for community-based services, it will take time before large psychiatric and social care institutions are phased out."

ISRAEL

Benefits battle



YAN VUGENFRER

A group of disabled people in Israel is demanding that benefits be brought more in line with earnings.

The website of the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, quotes a letter written to Yitzhak Herzog, Israel's Social Affairs Minister, which said: "At issue is a group of people that experiences economic instability in almost all aspects of their life."

The letter pointed out

that disability benefits have not risen in Israel for several years, while inflation has increased over that time.

The disabled people are demanding that, over the course of five years, benefit levels be brought up to match the minimum wage.

But they also want the criteria for benefit payments to be adjusted so that payments relate not, as at present, to a person's estimated earnings power but to the individual's level of impairment.

JAPAN

Tokyo ten thousand



A huge rally of 10,000 disabled people, their allies and supporters took place recently in the Japanese capital, Tokyo.

The event was attended by members of the Japanese Government.

One of the disabled people at the rally was quoted as saying: "We want every disabled person to be assured of the right to live in their local community without discrimination."

In particular the demonstrators were demanding the replacement of the 2005 Support for Persons with Disabilities Act, which is largely seen as regressive and unhelpful.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), for example, had previously observed that the Act had created significant barriers for disabled people in the labour market.

The ILO pointed out that each year there is a transfer rate of less than two per cent from work provided under welfare programmes and into open employment.

In addition, disabled workers in sheltered employment are low paid, and those working in certain facilities are not covered by employment rights legislation and are also required to pay service fees for the use of the welfare service.

PAKISTAN

High and not dry



It's reported from the Northern Pakistani province of Tangi that disabled people have found themselves last in line for aid distributed following the recent devastating floods there.

One disabled aid worker on the ground is Asim Zafar, of the Saaya Association of Persons with Disability. Amid pictures of disabled people being entirely dependent on family members to bring them food in the general scrum for aid, he says: "For almost everyone, whether international aid organisations or local charities, their focus is normal people. There is a sort of discrimination towards disabled people."

Zafar was in the province

distributing medical equipment and other aids to independence on behalf of his organisation.

"The biggest problem for flood-affected disabled people is that their mobility is further decreased at the relief camps," he went on.

"They sit in the scorching heat or intense cold till someone comes to their aid and moves them to some shelter."

Zakia is a disabled child who benefited from aid from Zafar's organisation.

She said, "I was totally helpless, completely dependent on my family members. But with this wheelchair I have got a new life. I can go around to take care of my own needs, see people and make friends."

one2watch

£50k is music to Vanessa's ears

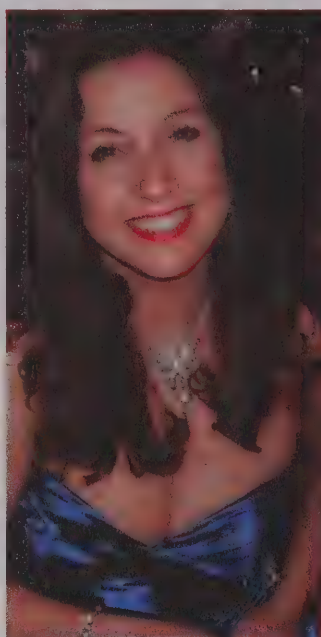
This year's winner of the £50,000 Stelios Award for Disabled Entrepreneurs, Vanessa Heywood runs Tiny Mites Music, which offers music, movement and drama to pre-school children. She answers our ten questions and says why she wants more parking, more patience and definitely more music.

What made you want to set up Tiny Mites Music?

I went with my children to a music session when they were very young in 2004. I was excited but it turned out to be a few mums sitting round singing *The Wheels on the Bus*, while the children walked off!! I needed to do something to earn money as a single mother with multiple sclerosis. I decided from that moment I would create exciting interactive music and movement sessions for pre-school children.

What is your favourite song or piece of music of all time?

I love Dianne Schuur singing *The Very Thought of You*. This reminds me of my son Charlie, as this was the only track that would



get him off to sleep when he was a baby. I also love the song *Somewhere* from *West Side Story*.

What do you like most about your job?

I love writing new songs but ultimately it is wonderful to see the reaction of children who are learning, creating and growing in Tiny Mites Music sessions.

What do you like least about it?

Doing the invoices, it has to be done, but it's so tedious. Luckily I now have a wonderful P.A. who has set up a system for me.

How do parents and children react to you as a disabled person?

They are usually very understanding and helpful; children are so loving and accepting they don't judge me at all.

What makes you angry?

When I am backing into a disabled parking space and someone starts hooting their horn or knocking on my window and pointing to the disabled bay sign and shaking their head at me! I think that because I drive an expensive looking convertible car, they automatically think I could not possibly be disabled, as I look too successful!!

If you were Prime Minister, what would you do to improve things for disabled people?

More disabled parking especially in town centres, more disabled loos, more schemes and

encouragement for disabled people to find work and create their own jobs, more support.

Who's your favourite disabled person ever?

Stephen Hawking – amazing, inspirational, awesome!

How do you sum up yourself in ten words or less?

My sister says, "Vanessa is professional, determined, creative, imaginative, hard-working, funny, generous and caring but on the rare occasions she loses her temper run for the hills!"

Do you have any special or hidden talents?

I'm quite crafty, I make rag dollies! I am also the one everyone asks to get the lid off bottles and jars!

• To find out more about Vanessa Heywood's work visit tinymitesmusic.com

→ Who do you think is One to Watch?

Send us your nominations for likely lads and lasses who could answer our 10 questions. They can be rising stars in any field of entertainment, business, the media or beyond

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Young Nelson

sailing to screen success

Sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll may not always be the best route to success, but for Wesley Nelson, playing the young Ian Dury in the recent bio-pic was just one more twinkle in an already sparkling career.

Annie Makoff finds out more about this driven young man and his forthcoming adventure in TV

I've been acting since I was six," says Welsh-born Wesley Nelson. "It's something I've always done. My older brothers and sisters have been involved in acting so it's been a family thing."

Wesley, who played the young Ian Dury in *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* (pictured right), is clearly no newbie to the acting profession. Having performed on stage, for radio, for the big screen and for television, the fourteen-year-old is very much the young veteran of the British acting world.

He is currently filming for a new CBBC series *The Sparticle Mystery* (pictured left). The thirteen-part drama filmed entirely on location, is set in a world without adults. When a science experiment goes horribly wrong, every adult on Planet Earth is teleported to a parallel dimension, leaving the world's children to fend for themselves. Together, they must form their own civilisation whilst uncovering the mystery that is the Sparticle Project, which could help them realign the two universes and bring the adults



back once and for all.

"*The Sparticle Mystery* is meant to inspire children to tackle problems head on, and work together as a unit," Wesley says. "It's got an underlying message about the importance of working together to achieve the end goal."

Featuring an all-child cast, the science-fiction drama explores a world without Mum and Dad – a world where children must be responsible for themselves and each other, a world

where children must be their own heroes if they are to save civilisation from ultimate destruction.

Having worked predominantly with British film-makers, British theatre and radio, Wesley has not found his disability to be an issue. "Hollywood may be different, so it may not be fine for me to walk into Hollywood and expect them to see past my legs," he explains, "but I have not experienced discrimination at all with people I have worked with. The directors always say that if you're right →

for the part, you should be able to get it regardless of disability."

To date, most of Wesley's parts have been written for disabled people, though in the case of the National Theatre's production *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, he played a part that wasn't specifically for a disabled person.

Wesley is adamant that being disabled hasn't negatively impacted on his acting career. Which is refreshing to hear.

"They could have got someone who wasn't disabled to play Ian Dury in *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* and someone who wasn't disabled in *Mrs Affleck* and the other things I've done. But they didn't, they chose me," he says. "I think it shows that if you're disabled it doesn't matter, whatever you want to be you can still do it."

In this latest TV adventure, Wesley plays Jeffrey, a wheelchair user with cerebral palsy who is the "lionheart" of the Sparticles gang. "I really bonded with Jeffrey – he is a really great character to play," he says. "Jeffrey has cerebral palsy like me, but his disability is more severe. I was able to draw from my own experience because there were some emotional parts in there."

For Wesley, *The Sparticle Mystery* was an entirely new experience. The all-child cast who ranged from nine to fifteen years old became his "on screen and off screen family", who all got on, socialised and had fun. And having fun, according to Wesley, is half the acting experience.

If playing Jeffrey was challenging (or "different", as Wesley insists) due paradoxically to their similarity, playing a real person – the young Ian Dury – brought different challenges. *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* drew in Ian Dury fans in their millions, all expecting to see a real likeness to the rock legend. For the role, Wesley immersed himself in all things Ian Dury. He watched music videos featuring Dury, listened



KEVIN CUMMINS

to his parents' record collections and found out as much as he could about his life and childhood.

"I became absorbed in him" Wesley explains. "We became the same thing. Even though it's challenging trying to be just like him, it was still really enjoyable. I got to rub shoulders with the likes of Ray Winstone and Herby Jones and they were great to work with."

I have not experienced discrimination at all with people I have worked with. The directors always say that if you're right for the part, you should be able to get it regardless 🧡

And after all that work on *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* what was it like to see himself on the big screen? "It was really cool" says Wesley. "But as an actor I'm quite critical and found myself thinking 'I could have done that better'. At the same time, it's great – seeing something you've been working on for so long and you get to see all your work put together."

As Wesley points out, seeing yourself on the big screen and gauging people's reactions is a totally different experience than on stage, where audience feedback is instant and, if you've done well, phenomenal. When Wesley performed in *Mrs Affleck* at the National Theatre in

2009 (pictured above), he was exhilarated by the audience reaction and even had someone approach him after the show congratulating him on his "incredible performance".

Looking at his impressive credits list, it is hard to imagine that Wesley, who will take his GCSEs in just under two years, finds any time for his school work. But Wesley's mature and practical approach translates across all areas of his life. He successfully juggles both priorities – not only catching up on schoolwork in between rehearsals, film shoots and at weekends but he proudly asserts that he is actually ahead in some subjects because he works at a faster pace than most his age.

His school have always supported his acting career, by ensuring they send work for him to do in between his acting jobs. At the same time, Wesley is acutely aware that should he fall behind with his work he wouldn't accept any more acting jobs until he has caught up again.

"The golden rule is take it as it comes. If jobs come along that the school and my parents are happy for me to do and I know I'm up-to-date with my work, I'll say yes. It's a similar approach I take to auditioning. If I don't get the part for a particular job I wait until the next job comes along and I try and get that, and so it goes on." Wesley adds: "That doesn't mean I don't think 'why didn't I get that job?' It would be wrong if I didn't try and learn from my mistakes,

but you mustn't dwell on the parts you didn't get – otherwise you won't enjoy the experience."

It is perhaps surprising that so young an actor would have adopted such a mature, philosophical approach to his career, especially when the acting profession is anything but predictable, as out-of-work actors will testify. Yet Wesley is confident in his acting career and has learnt not to get hung up on each job he doesn't get. "People do write for disabled children," he says. "And there are always jobs for everybody, no matter what your disability or your background."

Wesley's relaxed and happy-go-lucky character means he has no "favourite" dramatisation or play he'd love to appear in. If other boys his age were asked 'What would be your

dream film to star in?' they would reel off a list of titles. But not Wesley. Wesley is vague, and happily so. "I've never really had a part where I've been the villain. I would enjoy that," he says. "Or maybe playing a radically different part that would stretch my acting ability even more."

You mustn't dwell on the parts you didn't get – otherwise you won't enjoy the experience

Although he doesn't name obvious favourites, Wesley watches a range of films and programmes, not just for entertainment like most people his age, but to observe the techniques of other actors. He does admit that his favourite actor is Robert Downey Jr. who has

starred in the *Iron Man* films and *Sherlock Holmes* and he lets slip that his favourite TV series is *Friends*. "I'd love to meet Robert Downey Jr and also the whole cast of *Friends*," Wesley says. "That's partly what acting is about – being able to watch other people's work and enjoy what they do."

As to his future, Wesley is vague, of course. "I'd like to continue acting, and if there is work, I'll do it. If not, it's not the end of the world." He says: "Somebody once said: with acting, there is never an X Factor. You always hold on to the things you take from acting. Maybe it's confidence, maybe it's social skills, maybe it's something else. These skills never leave you. That's why acting is so great." ■

• *The Sparticle Mystery* will air on CBBC early in 2011.

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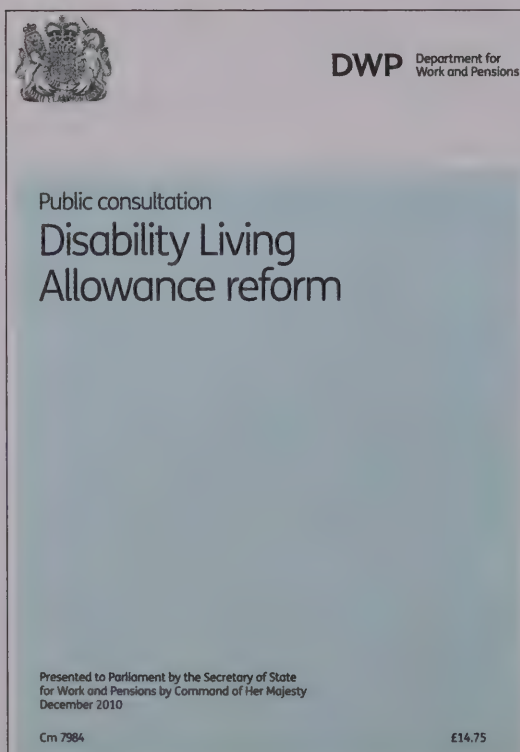
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PIP replacement

Threats real and perceived

Following the Government's announcement of a consultation on reform and replacement of Disability Living Allowance, **Paul Carter** and **Sunil Peck** analyse the extent of reform and gauge the fears and concerns it's prompted

Since the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition came to power in May 2010, speculation has been rife as to the Government's plans for potential reform of Disability Living Allowance. Since DLA was first earmarked for cuts in George Osborne's emergency budget back in June, *Disability Now* has received an overwhelming number of emails, letters and telephone calls from disabled people frightened, angry and apprehensive about changes, even before details had been released. At the Conservative Party conference in October, some even took to the streets to make their message heard. In social media, alliances on Twitter, Facebook and



blogs have been formed to unite against changes to a benefit which many disabled people feel allows them to live an independent life.

The existing lower, middle and higher rates of mobility and care components will be replaced by mobility and daily living components

After many months of leaks and rumours, the Government has finally come clean on its plans. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has produced a public consultation document seeking views on a radical overhaul of the existing system, which will see the existing Disability Living Allowance replaced



Alice Maynard

with a Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which the Government claims will be more efficient, and simpler to understand than the existing system, which it says has become “confusing, complex and unsustainable.”

From 2013/14, all new and existing claimants of DLA aged 16-64 will be required to undergo an assessment, regardless of the length of their original award. The Government is still deciding whether or not to assess children and those over 65. The existing rules of conditionality, that automatically qualify people with certain impairments or conditions, will be removed. The existing lower, middle and higher rates of mobility and care components will be replaced by mobility and daily living components, which will both have only a lower and a higher rate.

Maria Miller, Minister for Disabled People, tells *Disability Now* that the proposals needed to find a way to ensure that the benefit “continues to support those people it was designed to support.”

She says: “The concern that I have about the way that DLA is [currently] working is that the assessment process is subjective, complex, and that we



Maria Miller

don’t have a systematic way of assessing people’s changed needs over time. We need to make sure that the process is reformed to ensure that there’s a robust assessment process that does include reassessment over time, and make sure that people who need the support the most are receiving it.

“DLA has a very broad number of people applying for it and who are in receipt of it, with a very broad range of disabilities and conditions, so there are individuals who will have conditions that are life-long and others who will have conditions that will progress over time and others who will have short-term conditions. So the assessment process needs to be able to take account of those changes in a way that it doesn’t at the moment. Everybody is different and the assessment process that we are currently developing will be taking account of that as it’s finalised.”

Disabled people’s organisations, charities and DLA recipients alike have reacted with unease and fear to the proposals.

Online campaign group The Broken of Britain, set up in reaction to public spending cuts affecting disabled people, referred to the proposals in a

Our experience as disabled people is that the medical assessors they have selected for these kinds of roles previously have not had the skills for the job. That’s the bit that bothers me

statement as “an unnecessary and expensive rebranding exercise.”

“Although the caseload will be reduced, PIP will still look very much like DLA, albeit with a 21st century name at a time when government spending, is supposedly, being squeezed,” the group said.

“The current system allows for automatic entitlement to DLA for certain conditions. The new system will not; all claimants will be required to be reassessed every few years. This is not only foolish, but also costly as automatically entitled conditions are by nature the most severe and incurable. The only thing that will be achieved is extra cost of unnecessary assessment, additional complication instead of simplification and inconvenience for severely ill people.”

Rich Watts, Director of ECDP – a user-led organisation in Essex – said that the reforms “confirm the very worst apprehensions that we held.

“There is no getting away from the fact the Government has decided it wants to spend less on DLA and is justifying where it is going to draw the line to save the 20% they’re looking for,” he says.

“The idea that the reformed DLA system provides “unconditional” support is palpably nonsense. Moving from the system (where people can self-assess) to one where the explicit aim of the reform is to reduce the



number of recipients and spend by 20% is quite the opposite."

An area of concern highlighted by some is the suggestion in the proposals that a person's use of "aids and adaptations" may be taken into account in the assessment. This may mean that a wheelchair-user who can freely push their own chair may be deemed to not have restricted mobility.

Linda Burnip from campaign group Disabled People Against Cuts says that this leaves huge holes in eligibility.

"In essence the consultation document seems to be saying that if you need support and get funding from another source then you will not be eligible for a Personal Independence Payment, but at the same time that if you don't get funding for support from another source then in this case too you will not be eligible for PIP. Will any disabled people therefore be eligible?"

Others conceded that the time was right to have a fresh look at the way the DLA system is operated, but expressed concern over the manner of the Government's approach.

Alice Maynard, disability campaigner and managing director of Future Inclusion says that often things which were once revolutionary, such as DLA, sometimes outgrow their circumstances and need a fresh approach.

"There is reform necessary, but it's root and branch reform from the social model perspective that's required, not a tinkering around on the edges and a tightening up in a medical capacity," she says.

"I know the Government has said that they're not going to make it purely medical but the way in which they talk about it belies that commitment.

"Our experience as disabled people is that the medical assessors they have

selected for these kinds of roles previously have not had the skills for the job. That's the bit that bothers me – it's not the fact that we have to be reviewed, as that is about society using its resources effectively – "effectively" meaning don't do it so often that you spend more money than you save, and don't do it from a point of view purely of saving money."

Under the proposals outlined in the consultation, the application process for PIP will move away from the current system where people "self-assess" their condition, to one in which an independent medical consultation will be required.

All claimants will be required to be reassessed every few years. This is not only foolish, but also costly as automatically entitled conditions are by nature the most severe and incurable

Maria Miller insists that this assessment procedure is still very open to influence from responses received to the consultation, and that claims that the new assessment will follow a similar path to the heavily criticised Work Capability Assessment for Employment and Support Allowance, are wide of the mark.

"DLA is designed to take account of the additional costs of being disabled; this is not replacing income because of a loss of work or because of a barrier to getting into employment so there's a fundamental difference between this assessment process and the process for in-work benefit. But what we are trying to do is move away from what has become an incredibly complex and subjective assessment process to a

simpler and more objective process, which doesn't just rely on an individual filling in page after page after page in a form, which may well be more of a record of their own assessment of their condition rather than a professional's assessment of the way their condition affects their life.

"This is a consultation so we want to hear people's responses and if there are concerns around the way we're anticipating the assessment working or the types of areas that we're going to be looking at in terms of questions, it's for people to put forward those thoughts or respond to make sure that this measure really works for disabled people in the way we want it to.

"At the moment we have deliberately launched the consultation before the assessment has been finalised so that we can address any concerns that people raise, so the final questioning and the final way the assessment will be undertaken has not been decided. It's for disabled people and disabled people's organisations to come forward with their thoughts and we can try and make sure that the final assessment really does address any problems raised."

Many disability organisations are already mobilising to prepare responses to the consultation, which runs until 14 February 2011.

Neil Coyle, Director of Policy at Disability Alliance, said that his organisation has already begun consulting on DLA "to ensure a thorough investigation of the issues involved.

"Our research will be an in-depth analysis of DLA use, disabled people's needs and potential risks in the Government plans," he said. ■

• **Read the proposals and take part in the consultation by visiting dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2010/dla-reform.shtml**

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Renault Kangoo 1.5 DCi Expression (New Model)	HN58 UKS	3 Seats, Ramp, Air Con, Roof bars	Mt Aqua	12,000	11,495
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Renault Master 2.5 DCi	PO56 FNZ	5 Seats, Tail Lift, Air Con	Grey	20,928	10,995
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yourviews

Change battery, change supplier

Like David May ("Ask the Experts: How to avoid battery charge", *Disability Now*, November 2010) I am also annoyed by the high cost of batteries for my electric wheelchair.

Last time we had new batteries we were charged £180 for two batteries from a retailer. We didn't have to pay VAT as we'd bought other items from them and they had a VAT form signed by myself. However, my husband had to go and collect them, and they are very heavy and awkward to carry.

This year we decided to have a good look at alternative prices. We went online and found similar batteries

being sold at half the price that we had been paying. When we asked about VAT, one retailer said we'd have



to pay VAT up-front, but when the batteries were delivered they'd send a VAT form for us to sign and would refund the VAT, once they'd got the signed form

back from us.

The batteries arrived by courier the next day, at no cost to us, fully charged and with the VAT form enclosed. Within a week the VAT was credited to my bank account; the batteries were identical to the ones in my wheelchair!

You have to read the small print as some manufacturers charge for delivery and some don't give VAT back. If people aren't on the internet they could get information from the Yellow Pages.

I thoroughly recommend buying direct from the manufacturers.

Barbara Barry,
Horsham, West Sussex

I think my daughter deserves to be clothed. How can I make the Government agree?

I am the mother of a 43-year-old daughter with a profound learning disability (mental age 12-14 months).

Our daughter lived at home with us for 40 years but has now moved into a residential registered home with three other profoundly disabled adults. None of the adults speaks; all rely on others to speak for them.

I manage my daughter's money and the local authority takes all her Disability Living Allowance and social security, with the exception of the mobility component, which leaves



Iran, for non-runners

I was very interested in Marion Bull's article on Iran ("Iran: Persian paradise", *Disability Now*, December 2010). I've always wanted to see the country and was booked to go with Cox & Kings, but the visit was cancelled when the Iraq war started.

When I originally planned to go to Iran I could walk but can now manage only five minutes on foot. I am also 80 and use a power

wheelchair. What I'd like to know is whether Marion is disabled.

Aileen Ireland,
Crowsborough, Essex

EDITOR'S NOTE

On *Disability Now*, all our travel writers are disabled, with a range of conditions and impairments because it's essential that all our travel experience conveys the perspective of disabled travellers.

her with £21.80 per week. Part of her mobility is paid to the home to pay for a special bus, which carries three wheelchairs.

I am extremely concerned about the Government proposal to take away her mobility allowance.

The £21.80 she receives each week is meant to pay for all her clothes, toiletries, hair cuts, holidays and day-care costs (e.g. cinema, swimming, outings with drinks etc). In fact, the £21.80 will not even cover the cost of her clothes. She therefore has to use part of her mobility allowance to pay for these.

If she loses her mobility money, she will not be able to go out for any day care, or on holiday and will be without clothes to wear for four months of the year.

I read about the human rights issues, but surely our daughter has a human right to be clothed. I'm not talking about designer clothes, just dungarees and T-shirts.

I have written to my MP but what else can I do? Both my husband and I are in our 70s, and I suffer from arthritis. Our daughter comes home every 11 days for three days and will continue to do so for as long as we are able to cope. How can I stop this injustice?

Jean White,
Finchampstead, Berks

What's the best way to stay slim?

I became disabled in 1988 after being hit by a speeding car while riding my bicycle. I then put on weight, rapidly going from 11 to 19 stone.

I've never got rid of my excess body fat but I have found a way to manage it as best as I can.

Basically, the salads sold at ASDA (two for £3.00) do it for me. I buy six or eight every visit, as they have a short shelf life.

I combine this with fish as opposed to meat for main meals, and of course I snack on fruit. So far I've lost two stone without doing any exercise, not through choice, as exercise is difficult for me to do.

I wonder why *Disability Now* doesn't have diet information for the disabled. Those who are new to disability need to focus on what will stop rapid weight gain from occurring at the start.

People who are disabled have to be expert at keeping those fat cells at bay. I wonder how others who are less active keep slim!

Robert Bluck,
Birmingham



Graham Bool: Mary Wilkinson remembers

Following Phil Friend's obituary on Graham Bool ("Bionic carrot", *Disability Now*, December 2010), former *Disability Now* editor Mary Wilkinson writes: Graham and *Disability Now* were long-term friends, dating from around 1989. He always said we gave him a start in the disability world, but it was he who helped us to bring top quality pictures to our readers for "a special price". He covered political rallies, competition events, fashion, Naidex, and of course, his great love: disability sport.

Do others remember that outstanding shot of Tony Willis, the one-legged pentathlon world record breaker, leaping into the camera?

Graham was a lovely person to work with too. He was warm and enthusiastic, determined to do the job, even if it meant getting up at an impossibly early hour and driving miles. He always joined us for the *Disability Now* Christmas dinner. I kept up with him after I retired and, ever helpful, he supplied information for my book. I miss him.

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mikeoliver



Old lessons for a new politics

The recent merger of The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), the Disability Alliance (DA) and the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) poses some interesting issues for **Mike Oliver** and, he says, for the future of disability politics

To really understand what they are and, through their merger, what they may become, we need to understand the history of these three organisations and the roles they have played in our own history as disabled people.

RADAR began as the Central Council for Cripples and was rooted in the nineteenth century charity ethic. It later changed its name to the Central Council for the Disabled before finally becoming RADAR. DA was formed when a group of mainly non-disabled academics fell out with the Disablement Income Group over the right way to achieve a national disability income. NCIL began as the Independent Living Sub-committee of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) before cutting loose from that organisation to become independent.

Speaking personally I've never been really sure what RADAR did, though I do once remember purchasing a holiday guide from them



Disability alliance

and I still have a RADAR toilet key. DA's main claim to fame is its excellent Disability Rights Handbook but I can't think of much else it does. NCIL's original aim was to promote the idea of independent living to disabled people, policy makers and service providers and continues to provide that help now the idea is firmly established.

Neither RADAR nor DA have ever been controlled by disabled people or directly accountable to them and NCIL has also moved away from that position. Now, as I understand it, the aim of the merger is not to increase control and accountability but to increase the campaigning power of the new organisation. My problem with this is what does it



Speaking personally I've never been really sure what RADAR did, though I do once remember purchasing a holiday guide from them and I still have a RADAR toilet key

campaign about if it is not controlled and run by the group on whose behalf it purports to speak?

This is where history is relevant. It is an inescapable fact that the two most successful decades ever in raising both the profile of disability issues and the establishing of commensurate services

were the very same two decades where disabled peoples' organisations were at their most vociferous and powerful. Further, the gains made during that period were often achieved in the face of opposition from these non-accountable organisations who claimed to speak on our behalf.

Now, of course, it could be argued that things have changed since then and the newly merged organisations have created something different and fit for purpose for these changing times and circumstances.

However, I cannot escape from the lessons of our historical and recent past; namely that when non-accountable organisations have spoken for us our issues and our lives have been sacrificed on the altars of political collaboration, policy compromise and personal opportunism.

We'd better hope history really is bunk.

→ Have your say

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Works with Mobilise and specialises in matters to do with cars

Humiliation, not thoughtfulness

Q Recently I went with my husband to the HSBC Bank in Stafford, where the banking facilities are up a flight of stairs. Because I have seizures and have to use a wheelchair, we used the lift. This prompted the bank manager to ask me, politely, if we would not

come upstairs in future as he'd been advised that I was a fire hazard. I asked if he was going to put up a sign warning all customers about this. He said no, he was going to approach people individually, and would arrange for someone to run upstairs to do our transactions for us

when we came in. My husband asked if this was normal practice, as other shops and banks haven't requested such a thing. The manager ignored him. Talk about humiliation. Could you tell me if this sort of behaviour is justified.

Giovana Jarrett, Stafford



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Agnes Fletcher says:

This seems an extraordinary way for a business as big as HSBC to behave. You might expect this "we'll run upstairs and sort it out" from a small struggling business but not from a global company with annual profits of £7.2 billion.

First of all, it points to a lack of proper evacuation procedures for customers (and potential employees) on the first floor, if personal banking is to be conducted there. Second, it wrongly

implies that it's reasonable that you hand over personal banking to an employee to "run upstairs" with. Third, there's the ridiculous practice of the manager explaining all this to each customer individually once they've already got upstairs.

I asked HSBC to comment and got the following email: "We do try to help all our customers at Stafford Branch on the ground floor, which is designed to enhance customer areas and create an environment where staff are more visible

and readily available to assist customers. Stafford Branch provides full facilities as well as space for managers and customers to have meetings in private interview rooms on the ground floor. If any of our disabled customers wish to use the second floor where the counter is situated they are free to use the lift but are made aware that in the case of a fire the lift would stop operating and evacuation may be an issue. All our staff are trained to identify and assist customers who may have

difficulty accessing the counter by completing any transactions on behalf of the customer. We are sorry that our customer had a bad experience when they used the branch and thank them for bringing their experience to our attention. We will continue to train the staff at the branch on how to support all our customers and an evacuation chair is being ordered for the branch, for which staff will receive specific training and is for use in the unlikely event of an emergency. We will be contacting our customers to discuss how we can help them to access their banking facilities in the future."

I'm afraid this is a case of "special measures for special people", when what most of us want is to access services in the same way as non-disabled people whenever possible. Whether this is technically against the law or not is beside the point (a legal case would be needed to establish that). It is not good customer service and is not treating you and other disabled people in a dignified way. Either both floors should be fully and safely accessible to disabled people or only the ground floor should be used for customer banking (with appropriate arrangements for disabled staff who need to work upstairs).

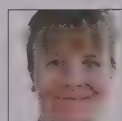


How can I help my son?

Q I am writing to you on behalf of my son because I don't know what to do. My son, Stuart, has a learning difficulty and some physical disability. He lived with me until February 2010 but was then moved to a supporting house and has found it isolating. He lives far away from all facilities like the supermarket, his doctor and the town centre. He doesn't travel easily, has no friends near him and is very lonely. Stuart wishes to move back to London. His social worker once unsuccessfully contacted the London Borough of Brent where he wished to move, and Golden Lane Housing, but

nothing has since been done to help him move. Stuart is now desperate and has told me he will run away and I'm even afraid that he might do something to himself because no one is listening. I can't let that happen. Stuart copes well with his disability but needs help. This is urgent.

R Walker, Hemel Hemstead, Herts



Kate Sheehan replies:

This is a tricky situation and

more common than you might think. The statutory services probably feel your son is adequately housed and will therefore not see him as a priority. It is also very hard to transfer someone from one local housing authority to another, as the person moving into the district will not receive any priority. Unless your son can show that his housing is having a detrimental affect on his health and well-being, or more seriously that there is a safeguarding issue (*definition of safeguarding: keeping the adult safe from harm, such as illness, abuse or injury*), then social services are unlikely to take active steps to assist. In your particular case, it would appear that your son may come under safeguarding and I suggest you contact his social worker, explain your fears about him wanting to run away, and clearly state that this is a safeguarding issue.

You can also always try your local CAB for help, and individual housing associations in your local area may allocate properties directly without going through the local housing department allocation process.

→ If you have a question for our panel

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- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

pete's place

Chickens have come home to roost



The outcome of the Government's own enquiry, together with a recent survey on benefit fraud, both give **Peter White** the right to say I told you so

The predictions I've been making in this column about the effects of the drip-drip, rising to a torrent, of alleged cases of benefit fraud by so-called "disabled people" in the press is beginning to bear the intended fruit; people are believing it!

The propaganda is having its effect. In a BBC survey conducted in the middle of

November, an average of 40 per cent believed that disabled people were turning down work when they were capable of doing it, a figure which rose to over 50 per cent amongst younger people – those between 18 and 24 – and people on lower incomes. That demographic is not surprising. These are the very people who are also being hardest hit by

the current economic situation, and who are struggling to get the same low-paid, limited prospect jobs that are available to many disabled people.

Tolerance is not easy when you're in a recession dogfight, and the papers you read are constantly telling you about people turning out for the pub football team every Sunday whilst claiming fat benefits; if they told you how hard they had had to try to find these people, your attitude might be different. Meanwhile, the

Harrington report on the Work Capability Assessment found that tests as currently conducted weren't a fair way of assessing ability to work; wouldn't take account of fluctuating conditions, or indeed the long-term effects of constant pain and the painkillers people have to take to quell it. The Government has said it fully accepts the report, and will implement it! Call me naive if you like, but I'm heartened by this! These tests have had such complaints levelled at them for the 15 years they've been in operation, but this is the first time so far as I know that they appear to have been listened to. Now: I'm not that naive! The Government is still intent on saving money: there are plenty of other things they can do to cut benefit; make eligibility tougher; put time limits on how long you get them for; and, well, just that – cut benefit. But this is now a test of the claim they have made repeatedly since coming into office, that these cuts are not aimed at hurting "genuinely" disabled people! We shall see!

ed cetera

"Being tiny, Master Tim, does not entitle you to a life on the Parish. On the contrary, it perfectly equips you for getting up chimbleys!"



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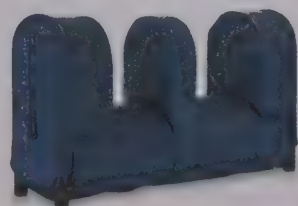
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guestcolumn

Hard times getting harder



Being the director of a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) is challenging according to a recent report from the Disability LIB Alliance. But, says **Tara Flood**, in the last 6 months it feels like things have got a whole heap worse

With the new Government giving a green light to reducing funding nationally and locally, whatever the cost to disabled individuals and our organisations, there is no doubt that as disabled people we appear, yet again, to be in the firing line. It goes without saying then that our organisations – those run and controlled by disabled people – will be at the sharp end of sweeping cuts to contracts and funding agreements. This can only mean a reduction in our capacity and in some cases ultimately closure.

Given that many of the people already employed in DPOs are themselves disabled, this doesn't help the Government target of getting more disabled people into paid employment – it does the reverse in fact.

At the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) we are proud of our long history of successful campaigning for change in the education system, but that success appears to mean nothing in a climate where cheapest is



best and competitiveness is everything.

As with many other DPOs we also have a long history of struggling to get funding because our work is focussed on social change as opposed to service delivery. Both are important and have led to real change in disabled people's lives, but campaigning for social change seems to have dropped off the list of priorities for many of our organisations. This is not a criticism but an observation of DPOs having to make impossible choices between taking local authority service contracts and the wish to agitate for change.

The coalition Government and Maria Miller, the new Minister for Disabled People,



UKDPC

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have clearly stated that "the 'big society' is inclusive of disabled people"; Miller has also indicated how important disabled people's organisations are in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – GREAT! But valuing the role disabled people's organisations play must come with resources to support our work.

I find it interesting but somewhat depressing that the Government's new "big society" fund, which has monies available to support the voluntary sector to be

more effective, excludes all those organisations who have a turnover of less than half a million pounds – my guess is that cut-off point excludes the vast majority of DPOs. It certainly excludes ALLFIE!

So disabled people and our organisations are facing extremely challenging times ahead. The optimist in me tells me that there will be a funder just around the corner who gets inclusive education and has lots of money to help ALLFIE make inclusive education a reality for all disabled learners. The realist in me reminds me that the struggle for equality and inclusion is not an easy struggle and finding money to support that struggle will never be easy either – anyone know of a cheap, out of work fund-raiser who loves a challenge?

• Tara Flood is Director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education. allfie.org.uk

→ Have your say

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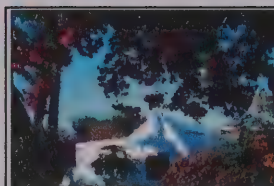
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upclose&personal

At school, girls are expected to be more sympathetic and expressive, so boys are discouraged from exhibiting such traits. Those that do are vulnerable to ridicule. There are certain rules to being a man; off the playing field, it can be difficult to equate emotion with masculinity.

I used to view having mental health problems as being indicative of weakness, and therefore, having the ability to maintain some kind of composure somehow reinforced my manliness. However, it took courage for me to ask for help. I felt like facing up to anything would be an admission of failure, and I certainly didn't feel any encouragement to come forward.

When I was diagnosed with anxiety at 21, in my eyes I was alone. I was also sure that I would be perceived as a madman. I was able to convince myself that I was okay for a while, but I began to withdraw. I was told to pull myself together, and as a result, I was reluctant to attempt any further social bonding. I felt like an embarrassment to my family, having let them down. I also felt like a bit of a fraud.

We are conditioned to behave in certain ways, and this is only reaffirmed by our peers, and the way in which we view the world.



© MAXFX - FOTOLIA.COM

Big boys don't cry

The traditional masculine image of the self-sufficient, tough, resilient man is deeply ingrained in society. This, says **John Hendy**, can have a deleterious effect on the way those with mental health issues are viewed and treated

The portrayal of men in the media and the way in which we interact with other men compounds the notion that emotional or confessional conversations are somehow inappropriate.

The polarisation of men and women's behaviour continues throughout life.

Disclosure may be the female disposition, but this is not to say that men do not connect, or develop meaningful relationships. It is a commonly held myth that men are simply unable to communicate; male friendships are unique and it's easy to dismiss them as

I felt like an embarrassment to my family, having let them down. I also felt like a bit of a fraud

lacking in depth.

I took solace in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). I was encouraged to look at my thought patterns, and how these contributed to my anxiety. Therapies that focus on action and behaviour rather than root causes can be easier for men to engage with. When treatments call for men to express their emotions, framing these emotions as an expansion of masculine traits can aid progression. CBT aims at emphasising goals, outcomes and productivity.

The myth of the unemotional man is taken as a given, and so the onus is put on encouraging men to open up and get in touch with their feminine side. This does not take the subtleties of masculinity into consideration. Young men lay on the bravado, and tend to stigmatise these problems more than any other age group. We are conditioned to act in certain ways. When mental health treatments are examined, I believe it is important to focus on the very traits that define our masculinity.



If you think you're sexy...

Disabled and sexy! Is that an oxymoron?
Not according to **Lara Masters** and
some of the people she's talked to who
are heading off into 2011

make-up, or a
queenly frock, or
going to an SM
club in fetish-wear.

"I feel least sexy
when I'm down,
insecure or

always commented on!

"I love high heels and the advantage
of being in a wheelchair is I don't have
to worry about walking in them! But
the thing that makes me feel sexiest is
wearing 'WOW' matching underwear
and showing some cleavage."

Shannon Murray, model, actress,
writer and wheelchair-user, also rates
having legs that go on forever!

"My least fave body-part is my
derriere; I'd love a bum like Kim
Kardashian, but generally, I feel sexy
rather easily! I don't have many hang-
ups about my body or disability: I may
not like every aspect of my body but
I've no shame about it – I did pose
nude for Quickie and BBC1!"

I'm not quite as un-phased by my
disability as Shannon but I appreciate
aspects of my physique and don't
mind stripping off (or being stripped!).
And apparently we're not the only
brazen disabled hussies. Stylist Tess
Daly who has spinal muscular atrophy
regularly gets her pins out.

The desire to feel attractive
must be built into our DNA.
Whatever our sexual orient-
ation, our drive to procreate
makes us want to appeal sexually.

Although women's magazines tell us
how to be attractive (i.e. look like
Cheryl Cole – yawn) there are many
more ways to give your mojo an MOT!

Clair Lewis, otherwise known as Miss
Dennis Queen, has mobility impair-
ments and received "Campaigner of
the Year 2010" at the Erotic Awards for
her work with Consenting Adult Action
Network.

"I feel sexy when I'm doing things I'm
good at and most confident when I'm
dressed-up in something flattering or
fun, like a sharp suit with immaculate

poorly dressed. Dressing-up makes me
feel sexy, but appearing sexy to others
is about my emotional state, not how I
actually look."

Debbie Deboo (*pictured above*) who
makes Glam Sticks (as featured in
Disability Now, November 2009) agrees.
"I feel least sexy when I put on weight,
but I find men don't mind your weight
as much as you do, and being
confident with a curvier body is far
more attractive than a thin girl with no
confidence.

"I like my boobs and legs, and feel
sexy wearing layers of scented beauty
products like Chanel No 9, body lotion
and perfume and a gorgeous-smelling
shampoo. If your hair smells good and
someone gets close enough, it's



Being herself: style diva Lara Masters

"My legs are the best part of my body. Although I'm a total short-arse, they're quite long, a good shape and usually tanned.

"I feel confident when I've spent time on my hair and make-up, and I'm in a short dress and towering heels. Nothing's more empowering than a sexy pair of shoes, particularly when I don't have to hobble around in them!

"I least like my neck, as due to my spinal fusion it has twisted slightly to the left and does knock my confidence. Also, I have days when I really struggle to do the few things I can do. It's hard to feel sexy when I'm feeling more disabled than I already am!"

My friend, comedian and wheelchair-user Liz Carr also has moments of conflict about her body. I organised a choreographer for her wedding dance

recently and quizzed her about body-image.

"I feel confident when I think I look hot – I love my legs, my hair, eyes, neckline – but I feel least sexy when I look at my body and it doesn't reflect how I feel. I'll be thinking I look hot but then I'll catch a glance of myself and feel disappointed.

"I'm frail and freaky looking but I love my body for the pleasure and experience it gives and for what it's survived. I often think; "Thanks for getting me this far..."

Being disabled may sometimes hinder our gratitude for our body but feeling confident is about dressing-up and making the bits we love stick out (literally!). So, the more we appreciate our physical form the sexier we feel. Let's have a hot 2011 girls! Grrrrrr!

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Roman holiday: pizza, pasta and piazzas

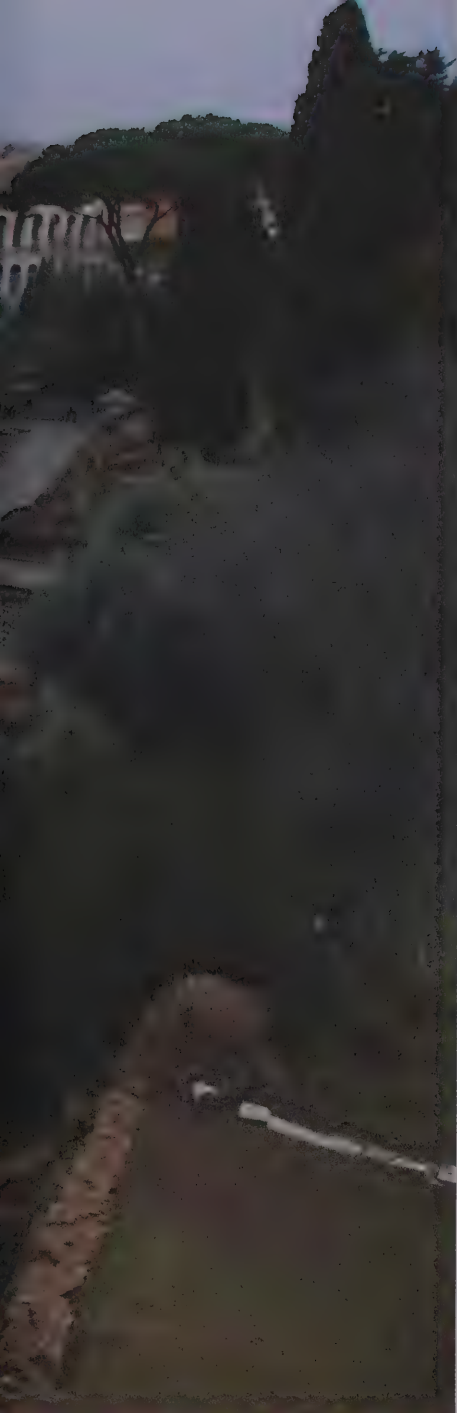
Our campaigning columnist **Ruth Patrick** describes a trip to the Eternal City where, while fully partaking of la dolce vita, she wasn't quite able to leave behind her quest for benefits information

Facebook has great potential in one particular department – hooking up with old friends with whom one has lost touch. In the course of feeding my Facebook addiction, I have made contact with a

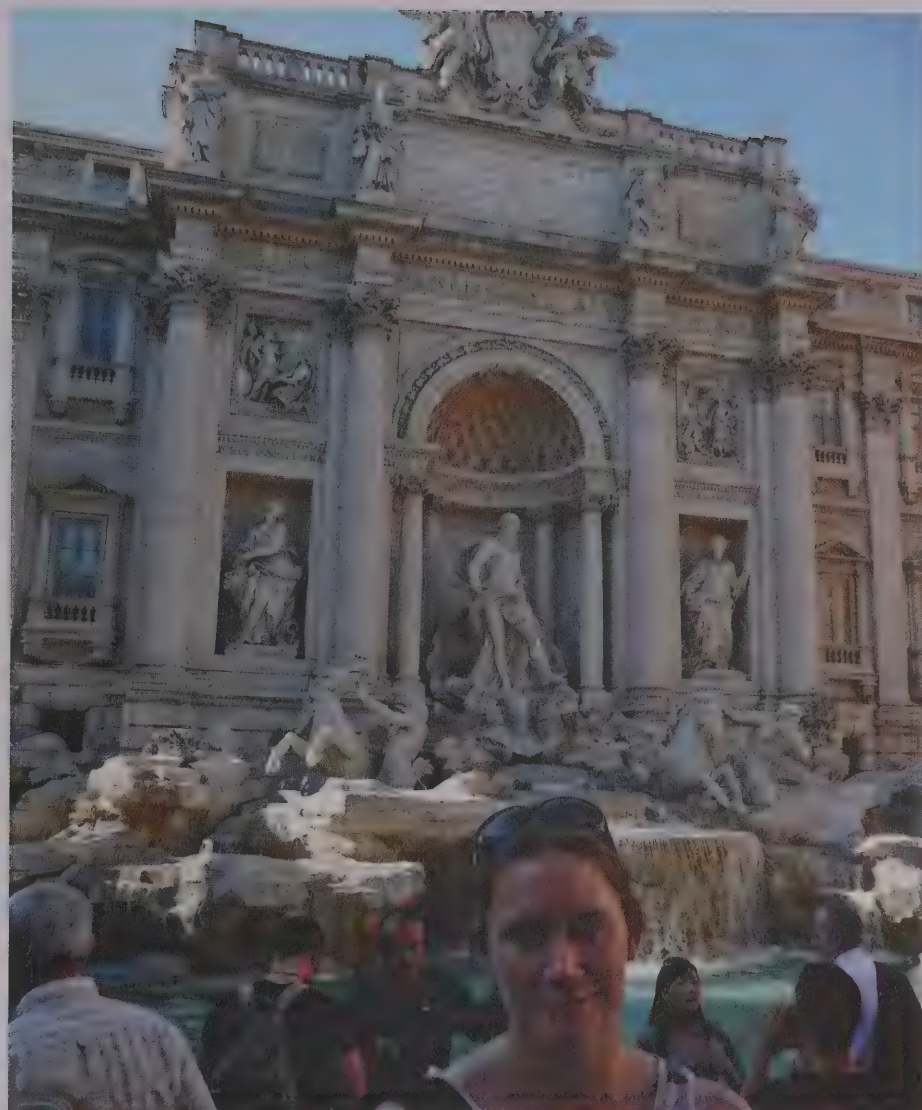
number of old friends and colleagues, many of whom I thought I would never see again. One such friend is Arianna, an Italian woman and jewellery designer who I lived with many, many years ago, when I first moved to

London. When she invited me and my partner to Rome, I leapt at the chance: an opportunity to see her again after all these years, and a chance to discover Italy's great capital city.

We spent a glorious five days in a



JAMIE TROUNCE



Left: Forum Romanus; above: Ruth at Fontana di Trevi

Did you know?

Contraception had a place in ancient Rome. Some doctors recommended wearing the liver of a cat in a tube on the left foot to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

beautiful fountains, archaeological sites of Roman ruins and amazing museums and galleries. For anyone thinking of going, my advice would be to do your research in advance and develop an itinerary or must-see list which is realistic, flexible and catered to your own particular interests.

For me, an absolute must-do was to see inside St. Peter's, the principle shrine of the Catholic Church. The dome of St. Peter's or Basilica di San Pietro, to give its full Italian title, is visible from almost anywhere in Rome,

and the church itself is situated at the head of the grand Piazza San Pietro. Entrance is free, another reason it was on my itinerary as my Scottish roots demand that free attractions always get very favourable treatment.

Arriving in the Piazza you cannot help but be struck by the grandness and historical significance of the building you are about to enter. Regardless of your religion, it really does feel like you have arrived at one of the most important sites of the Western world. Getting into the



Did you know?

If you fancy a night out with a difference, head to Rome's restaurant La Parolaccia, which literally translates as "bad words". Here the waiters promise to insult and make fun of you all night – and charge you for the privilege. My Italian friend tells me this restaurant is both exclusive and expensive – very odd!

church involves passing through metal detectors and multiple, unsmiling, suited functionaries, who check that you are wearing appropriate clothes (men must be in trousers; whilst women's legs, shoulders and chests must all be covered). Interestingly, my friend tells me that the clothing rules are rather more strictly enforced for women than men, and on the day we went my partner's mid-length shorts passed through the clothing check without remark.

Once inside, we were overwhelmed by the grandness and ornate interior of the church: everywhere you turn there are intricate stain-glass windows, beautiful sculptures, golden inscriptions and impressive bronze plaques. Indeed, the mass of religious artefacts and evident wealth of the church can seem a little excessive, depending on your religious sensibilities. For us, it was certainly breathtaking and memorable, and I would recommend including a visit to St. Peter's in a trip to Rome.

Aside from St. Peter's, the other tourist attraction which is unmissable is the Vatican Museums close by, which the Rough Guide to Rome describes as housing the "largest, richest, most compelling and perhaps most exhausting museum complex in the world." 'Vatican Museums' is in plural, not because of some *Disability Now*



JAMIE TROUNCE



JAMIE TROUNCE

Top: The Colosseum at night; above: Sistine Chapel's ceiling painting; below: Piazza Navona



RUTH PATRICK

typo, but because there are several museums all accessed by one central entrance and connected by various courtyards and corridors. Getting inside the Vatican Museums is famed for entailing long queues, but we were incredibly fortunate to be in within ten minutes, where we paid our 15 euros and set out to see as much of the museums' collection as our tired feet and growling appetites would allow. As with most tourists, we were most interested in seeing the Sistine Chapel, but there was much else to interest and detain us. In particular, the Egyptian artefacts are fabulous, as are the renaissance statues. One source of irritation and amusement are the tour guides and their customers, who crowd round the statues and paintings, whilst the guide loudly proclaims on the history and context of each famous piece. This becomes a cacophony of noise, with echoes of tour guides reading from slightly different passages of almost identical scripts a constant companion on the trip round the museums.

The Sistine Chapel, with its ceiling paintings by Michelangelo, is incredible and it is no wonder that some 15,000 tourists trudge in to view them every day. The scale of the work is what impressed me most: it is reported that it took Michelangelo ten years to paint, and the finished work is testament to one artist's great dedication and patience. You certainly wouldn't get me to focus on one project for a decade!

Other than our exhausting, but rewarding, trip to the Vatican Museums, we also made it to the Colosseum, and trekked out to the Spanish Steps and Fontana di Trevi, Rome's flashiest and largest fountain.

A bit of respite from the city chaos was found in the lush green of the Villa Borghese, Rome's largest open space, where we were content to sit quietly and

Did you know?

The Vatican City is the smallest country in the world covering an area of just 108.7 acres. It has its own post office, fire brigade, police service, bank, electricity generating plant, newspaper, publishers, radio and television centre.

reflect on all we had seen. We were also glad to escape the city streets, where the traffic is frenetic and insensible, and where every time you cross the road you feel a little uncertain whether you will make it safely to the other side.

An "if only we could can it and keep it moment" was had in Piazza Navona, where we sat in a plush and expensive café, sipped our coffees, and watched the Italians going about their business, feeling very much the sophisticated and seasoned travellers. Indeed, hours could be spent in people watching, with the Romans providing a glamorous, stylish and, frequently, dramatic backdrop to the city. The passion for which the nation is famed is much in evidence, although it did not rub off on my own partner, who refused street sellers' frequent attempts to sell him a single red rose.

One thing which I found rather unsettling was the begging on Rome's streets, with many of the beggars having physical impairments and adopting dramatic, disturbing poses; lying on the floor, for instance, with arms outstretched. The extent of the visible begging, which is undoubtedly common in many European cities, got me thinking about the benefits system in Italy and the provisions made for disabled people in particular. Discussion with my friend and a bit of digging back home and I had my answer. Academics and campaigners in Italy argue that the available disability benefits are simply

not sufficient to enable disabled people to live independently, who must rely instead on financial support from their family. Clearly, serious problems emerge where such support is not available or forthcoming.

An article on Rome is incomplete without paying homage to the food, and we were sure to invest plenty of time in sampling all the staples: delicious thin pizzas, pasta like none we had ever tasted, and gallons of ice cream. We dined in local restaurants and stayed well away from the tourist joints, which offer set, unappetising menus for vastly inflated prices. I enjoyed the dining culture in Rome, where families take their children out with them to restaurants, and where one beer is felt sufficient to last the whole evening (it must be said that my partner was rather less keen on this latter aspect of the Italian experience). Most of all, I enjoyed the chance to catch up with my old friend and to reminisce – though how wonderful to do that in a city as rich, interesting and beguiling as Rome. ■

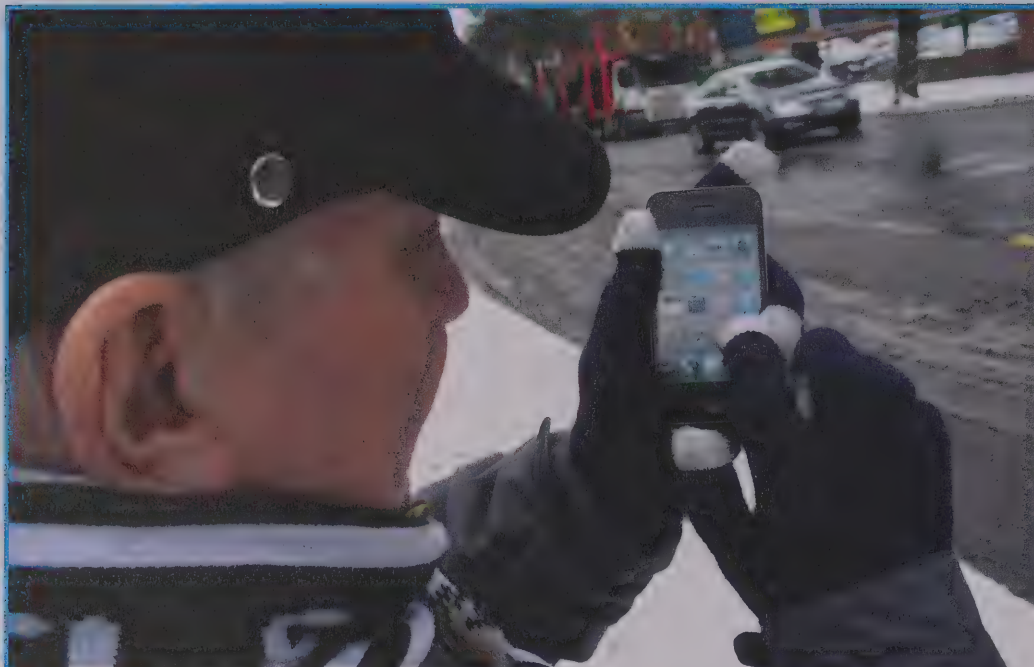
Information

Ruth flew to Rome Fiumicino with Jet 2 from Leeds Bradford (jet2.com)

The Consorzio Cooperative Integrate provides a 24-hour information line, website and guide to the city, *Rome Accessible*, which contains information on accessibility to major sites, museums, hotels and restaurants. Unfortunately, the website is in Italian: coinsociale.it

For wheelchair-users, this is a useful website with tips for getting around Rome in a wheelchair, written by a woman who has done it: slowtrav.com/italy/accessible/rome/index.htm

tried&tested



JAMIE TROUNCE

Glove story

How easily is technology rendered useless? Put on a pair of gloves, for instance, and bang goes the possibility of using your iPhone. But **Ian Macrae**'s got his hands on (or in) something that claims to change all that

It's said that you learn something new every day. For instance, I recently discovered that ecru is "The light fawn colour of unbleached linen" as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary.

The word came to my attention from information which hit my desk about some new gloves on the market.

And that wasn't the only thing that interested me. Trust me, my life is not so

sad that my excitement is stirred by the prospect of a new pair of gloves.

But the sample gloves arrived at just about the same time as the recent cold snap, and just as I was starting to get fed up of removing and replacing gloves in order to operate my iPhone's touch screen in the great outdoors.

These Etre Fivepoint gloves have what are known as "Conductive fingertips". That means that it's possible

to operate touch screen equipment such as cameras, iPods, iPhones or iPads while still wearing them.

And I bet you're agog to know how they can do this while ordinary gloves can't.

According to the promotional material on the website, it's to do with capacitive material – knew you'd be fascinated – and the fact that ordinary gloves don't conduct electricity while the Fivepoint gloves, and indeed our fingers do.

Enough of the theory, how about the practice? With the weather having been how it has and what with me having a pretty text active family, I've had plenty of chance to try them.

The first thing to say is, as they're made of 98% lamb's wool, they certainly keep your hands toasty right to

the conductive tips of their and your fingers. This is a boon if, like me, you've previously relied on fingerless gloves to retain your sense of touch in the cold, which are marvellous at keeping your palms nice and snug while your fingers drop off from frost bite.

Performance wise – though it seems odd to be judging gloves on their performance, there's no question that it is possible to operate the touch screen while wearing the gloves. However, be sure to buy the right size for you as flapping fingertips are likely to have an impact on accuracy, particularly when using the text input keyboards.

Similarly, the seam at the end of each finger can reduce accuracy and result in more mistakes than usual being made.

Marks out of five? I'd have to say three and a half. They're very good at keeping your hands warm and dry, they do allow you to operate your touch screen device, but be prepared to accept the frustration that can come from a loss of accuracy.

INFORMATION

Etre Fivepoint gloves, £24.99 from online and high street stockists.

More information from fivepointgloves.com

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helen dolphin

Transport body fights quangos bonfire



Hundreds of former Government advisory groups are falling prey to vigorous Coalition axe-wielding. As a member of one, **Helen Dolphin** is witnessing a battle for prolonged life

In September's *Disability Now* I wrote that the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) was to lose half its members in a recruitment freeze.

My understanding was that of its 19 members of staff, 10 would be left to carry out all the work of advising Government and industry on the impact of transport legislation, regulation, guidance and policy on people with disabilities.

I knew my own position on this non-departmental public body was on the block, but since DPTAC has a statutory duty to consider any matter referred to it by Transport Ministers, I was confident that the body itself was safe.

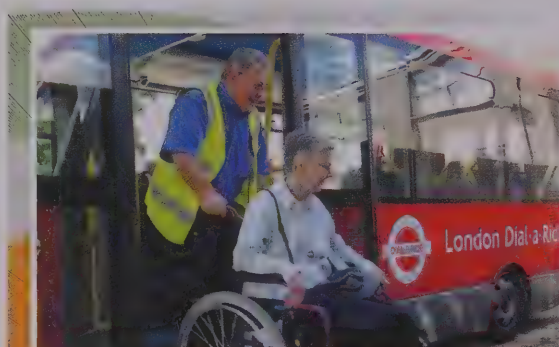
I was therefore shocked to hear in the Public Bodies Bill that DPTAC had been earmarked for scrapping. There have admittedly been dramatic improvements in the accessibility of public transport in most urban areas in the UK, but much still needs to be done, and DPTAC has had a vital role

in ensuring that improvements have been made, and offering a wider, pan-disability view than bodies like Guide Dogs and Mobilise have been able to offer.

Winding up DPTAC is expected to take about a year. In the interim period, it will continue to operate, and as the minimum legal number of members is 11, Tomi Jones who was the former chair of the road-based working group has had his term extended.

Chair Dai Powell is adamant that the work of DPTAC will continue for as long as possible, but with significant changes. Some of the functions previously undertaken by DPTAC will no longer be able to be done, he has said, but the rump of DPTAC will spend much of its time covering its statutory duties, and trying to do as much as possible on ministerial consultations and advice.

A review is already underway on DPTAC's succession and what statutory duties its replacement would need to undertake. Dai Powell



said: "We will be working very closely with the Department for Transport during this review to ensure that the transport needs of disabled people are top of the agenda in the department and that the ministers can get the independent advice they need."

The reason for getting rid of DPTAC was said to be

that the Government wanted a "more flexible approach". It has yet to be seen what this will look like but it is important that the successor body, whatever its format, has the remit, independence and credibility to ensure that the needs of disabled people are kept at the top of the agenda.

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By Paul Carter



Year ends on a high for young British hopefuls

Two of Great Britain's hottest prospects in wheelchair tennis ended 2010 in style as they both lifted trophies in the last tournament of the year to have British interest.

In the men's competition, British number two Gordon Reid secured his third win of the season against a world top-10-ranked opponent to win the men's singles final at the ITF 3 Series Prague Cup Czech Indoor.

Second seed Reid beat Austrian world No 9 and top seed Martin Legner 7-5, 6-3 to add to his two previous tournament wins.

In September he defeated the world No 8 and world

No 10 in successive weeks to win back-to-back ITF 2 Series titles.

"It was a really good week, I'm very happy with how I played, especially after such a nightmare of a journey," said the 19-year-old Scot, who arrived in Prague on Wednesday, almost 24 hours later than planned due to delays caused by the wintry weather across Britain.

"It was a really good way to end the year and now I'm looking forward to a bit of time off and then getting back into training in the New Year," he said.

Reid is now likely to earn an improvement in his

current men's singles world ranking of number 14, having started 2010 world ranked number 17.

His win ends a successful tournament, coming on top of his being runner-up in the men's doubles.

In the women's competition, Jordanne Whiley won her fourth doubles title on the 2010 NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour as she brought the curtain down on her season by partnering Dutchwoman Aniek van Koot to retain their women's doubles title.

Earlier in the day, Whiley had finished runner-up to top seed van Koot in the

women's singles final for the second successive year.

British No 2 Whiley and van Koot justified their top seeding for the women's doubles, completing the tournament without dropping a set as they beat German second seeds Katharina Kruger and Bianca Osterer 7-5, 6-2. Meanwhile, after securing a first career singles win over van Koot in the final of October's Nottingham Indoor, 18-year-old world No 10 Whiley made a fine attempt at recording back-to-back victories over the world No 5, but was eventually edged out 6-7(4), 4-6.

Paralympic gold medallist in two-year drugs ban

The international athletics career of former Paralympic gold medallist Roberto La Barbera looks set to be over, following his banning for two years after failing a doping test.

The Italian long jumper, who took gold at Athens in 2004, tested positive for the anabolic steroid Stanozolol.

La Barbera, 43, provided a positive urine sample after competing at the International Wheelchair & Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS)

European Athletics Open Championships in Stads-kanaal, the Netherlands.

Under IPC regulations, La Barbera will now no longer be eligible to compete in the Paralympic Games in London in 2012.

In a statement, the IWAS said that La Barbera would be stripped of any medals, points and prizes won at the championships where the test took place, and from all competitions from the date of the positive

sample in June.

It said: "As a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC), IWAS remains committed to a doping-free sporting environment at all levels.

"IWAS, together with the IPC, all international federations and our member nations, established the IWAS Anti-Doping Code to prevent, in the spirit of fair play, doping in sport for Paralympic athletes. The IWAS Anti-Doping Code is



in conformity with general principles of the WADC."

La Barbera specialised in the F44 category.

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Sally, Michelle's mum



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entertainmentnow



Poet, performer, participant, **Penny Pepper** records her experience of DaDaFest, Merseyside's disability and Deaf arts festival

DaDaFest feels like being on some wacky rock and roll tour. I'm chuffed and excited to be there. Days and nights blur into a rush of rehearsal and performance with scarcely a moment to see the city and the daylight. Only on Wednesday as the sun goes down, do I sneak in some shopping, glad to get acquainted with friendly Liverpool.

Whirling along by day in a melange of different creative practices, and evenings, if time and stamina allow, I go to see friends doing their stuff. Yet, time is tight. As well as being in *Criptease*, I'm at DaDaFest to be a "prowling

I'm at DaDaFest to be a 'prowling poet' and appear in the John-Yoko inspired *Bed-In*. I have many preparations, in between rehearsing my burlesque number. No Saturday off for Penny!

poet" and appear in the John-Yoko inspired *Bed-In*, I have many preparations, in between rehearsing my burlesque number. No Saturday off for Penny!

Saturday, and I make my way through the busy crowds for my bed-in. As

Paperback Writer rings out, my PA assists me onto the bed. I do a storytelling slot, linking in moments in my life that I realise with hindsight had intersected with times of protest – and war. The most notable time being on the day my book *Desires* was published. I was there at BBC Broadcasting House, with Tony Cowell (brother of X Factor Simon) ready to do interviews... and the US invaded Iraq – and wiped me off the schedules!

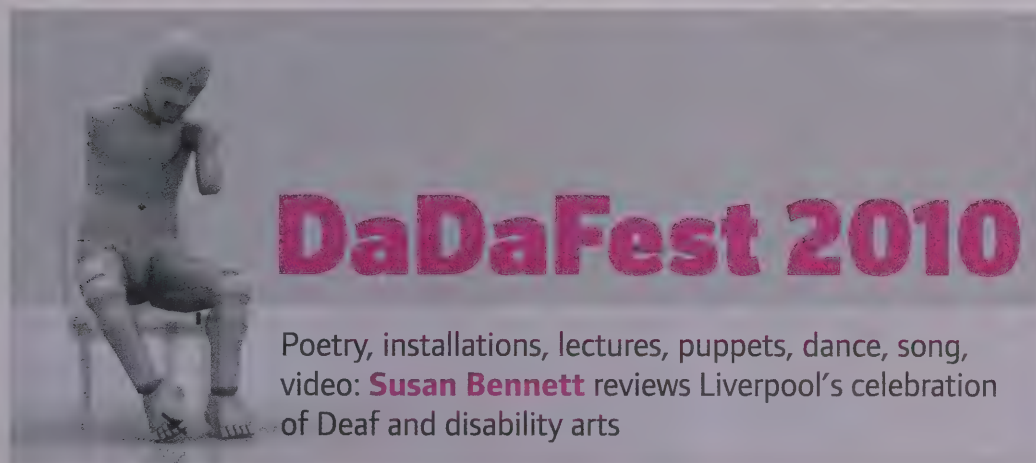
I end the bed-in with a protest song. To the tune of *Yellow Submarine*, words handed out to the audience. Many join in with gusto as I sing verses I'd managed to write late the night before. This will be one of many

poignant memories from my DaDaFest days.

I change clothes, readying myself to deliver poems amongst the buzzy throng. Nervous at first, I soon take to prowling my pieces with relish. As the DaDaFest theme is "Objects of Curiosity and Desire", I devise a route and choose a suitable poem of mine on the theme. People like this game!

It is lovely to do burlesque training with Jo "Boobs" Weldon, who runs the New York School of Burlesque, to train us up for the DaDaFest event *Criptease*. The rehearsals fly past in a funny frenzy of set development and costume gathering. All week the room is an explosion of tassels, glitter, a sparkly, spangly, glitzy glamour space gone wild and crippled out. We spend most of Sunday getting ready, and then... here we are! Six crip girlies wheeling and walking, stripping and shimmying our stuff with laughter and pride to the audience. A magnificent event and something burnt with love and joy on my memory.

• Penny was shortlisted for an Emerging Talent award at this year's festival.



The Bluecoat was a hectic venue for many happenings. Its Hub was always bustling, in and outside, in spite of, or maybe because of the cold. Prowling poets lurked waiting to tempt you with their best.

For those with leisure to browse the fringes were exhibitions such as Tom Shakespeare's haunting images: *Incarnate*, *The Nightmare* and the *Vulnerability of Embodiment*, a purple Pope accompanied by two sides of beef. Situated on the busy first floor landing of the Bluecoat they were both powerful and compulsive.

And there was more than entertainment at the Bluecoat. A series of lectures entitled *The Dark Behind My Eyelids* were challenging and surprising. For who could forget the work of Hansel Bauman of Gallaudet University in

America which attempts to use the visual instinct of Deaf and disabled people in architecture and urban planning?

And you think you are normal? Fully normal rather than abnormal? Completely abnormal? Well, the presentation by curator Ine Gevers of the *Niet Normaal* Dutch exhibition made you think again.

Moving on to the World Museum, where the Oskia Bright Film Festival was taking place, you could see a feast of short videos produced and performed by disabled people. *Day and Night* by Dance Delight was a beautifully filmed sequence of inset clips, set to music in stylised settings across an urban park. *Shoot Your Mouth Off* had it all:



gunslingers, blood and King Fu fighting, to an ominous bell which sounded just as the hero was being told "Playtime's over"... and the "To be continued..." caption rolled.

On the next floor of the World Museum was a remarkable exhibition of photos taken by Deaf and disabled young people from Liverpool, average age 15. Emma Clarke's shot of a furling flag against the skyline was as crisp and clear as the ice outside and Jack Spencer's jokey photo of a cartoon on a mug captured the city's famous sense of humour exactly.

Deaf children too had great fun at the Grimstones puppet theatre. The story *Hatched* showed the fascination of books, family love and fantasy. Told with giant tomes, gothic marionettes and sign language, the puppeteers, Asphyxia and August, managed to be both in and out of the action at the same time. This was no mean feat when you consider all the wires they were holding! The fairy tale unfolds before you with intricate precision and going by the rapt faces of the audience, it was a treat for parents as much as children.

The Young Dada Awards in the second week were



the culmination of a lot of hard work by school groups and organisations across Merseyside. With boundless energy, the stage at the Contemporary Urban Centre was a feast of sparkles, glitter, hand clicking, percussion, dancing and voice. Catchy songs had us all clapping along and swaying in time to the beat. The only pity was that there weren't more awards to hand out as every performer deserved an accolade.

On the penultimate night of DaDaFest came the

chance to attend a preview of *I fall to pieces*, Kaite O'Reilly's work for the 2012 London Olympiad. The consummate performance of Julie McNamara did more than complete justice to the power of Kaite's words. Inspired by interviews and interactions with Deaf and disabled people across the UK, the dramatic monologue explored the issues and challenges of mental health.

Finally, on 3 December 2010, it was the International Day of

Persons with Disabilities and DaDaFest celebrated with VSA, The International Organisation on Arts and Disability, based in Washington, DC. 17 countries held an international screening of artist Simon Mckeown's *Motion Disabled* to raise awareness about disability rights.

Also shown at Liverpool's Bluecoat throughout the

festival, *Motion Disabled* is a 3D digital animation video which originally featured 14 disabled actors. It focused on a new work with Claire Cunningham, an internationally acclaimed disabled dancer, which was recently on the BBC's *Culture Show*.

So, a thrilling DaDaFest International 2010 to celebrate its tenth successful year!

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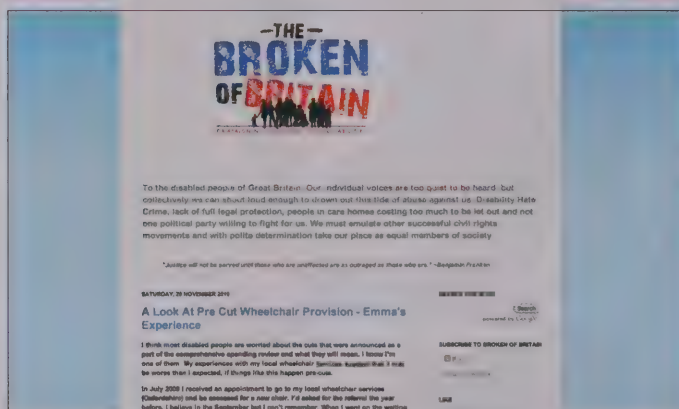
Tweeting out: Broken of Britain



Despite barriers to full access, the internet is a place where disabled people can, at least in theory, have the opportunity to make ourselves heard as much as other people. The new digital based lobby group The Broken of Britain is a great example of this. Founder member **Kaliya Franklin** – aka Bendygirl – tells more

Borne of frustration after the Comprehensive Spending Review announced cuts disproportionately impacting on disabled people, the founders of Broken of Britain effectively use the various social networking tools available online to quickly morph one person's idea into a loose collective of several hundred voices.

Our previous experience of using social media to lobby for increased disability rights and access meant that we could effectively and rapidly target our campaign to the right people and places. Using sites like Twitter we can immediately alert the media to issues, directly contact politicians to ask their support, seek out celebrity support and interact in real time with each other to work as a group. The real time element of social networking means that with just a mouse click,



people we contact can help share our message with their followers. We can direct our concern about things like the removal of the Higher Rate Mobility allowance from care home residents both to our own MPs and to those we know to be more supportive, such as Anne Begg, the disabled MP who is also chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

The group was launched through Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and the existing network of disability blogs and forums, enabling us to inform other disabled people of our plans and ask them to join us immediately. There is a vast array of

individuals and groups with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health problems already using the internet to work together, so at Broken of Britain we work with a very wide definition of disability to include and complement all those groups. We believe the principle that individual voices are a whisper, but together a group can shout and demand to be heard.

By encouraging others to share their personal stories, using just a first name or

pseudonym if they prefer, we have been able to quickly build up a collection of case studies highlighting the already woeful inadequacies in welfare, health and social care. The common theme through all these stories is how much people long to work, how they have contributed and paid tax wherever possible, and how very frightened and vulnerable this constant onslaught of announcements of "reforms" is making those genuinely unable to work, whilst leaving fraudulent individuals untouched and unafraid. Social media gives us a platform to alert the media and wider public to the impact of these cuts on the very people they most wish to protect.

• To join the Broken of Britain group, go to thebrokenofbritain.blogspot.com

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Angie and her sparring partners

There were a lot of groundbreaking TV programmes to come out of the 80s, and one of them was *Same Difference*, a disability magazine series.

By today's standards it would probably be thought quite tame but it was revolutionary at the time. I was an assistant producer on the programme, and it ran for five years. We covered anything and everything relating to disability. Viewers would phone in and we'd answer their questions and give advice on air.

It was eventually pulled because Channel 4 wanted to get "more mainstream" and decided to move everything – disability, race issues, equality etc – into one entire strand.

Around the time of *Same Difference* I worked for a couple of independent production companies in Bristol and went on making documentaries for Channel 4 and BBC, although these tended to be one-offs rather than series.

I found myself becoming more and more involved in the disability movement. As a disabled person and a personal carer, I was really driven to campaign for a movement that lobbied for anti-discrimination



It's a far cry from the days when disability was central to TV schedules, so the watch word for independent producer **Angie Carmichael** has had to be diversification

legislation and the right to independent living for those with disabilities.

At some point I realised there needed to be a forum for disabled people, a place for information and for encouraging self-advocacy, so I set up a production company called Sparring Partners which is now diversifying into disability consultancy. And that's what I continue to do now.

I work for myself as an independent consultant, I set up Wiltshire People First which is an advocacy organ-

isation run by and for people with learning difficulties and I'm an independent consultant to *I'm a Person Too*, a national training

programme delivered primarily to the public sector, aiming to improve communication channels between the public sector and those with learning difficulties.

I think there is a lot of misunderstanding about learning disability and how services should communicate with people with learning difficulties. There are some pretty obvious ways, like making everything "easy read", using pictures and symbols and using large text, but I think it's mainly the difficulty that people have trying to use mainstream services in the first place. The aims that *I'm a Person Too* focuses on are about inclusion and, of course, putting people first. It's not about creating separate services for people with learning difficulties like some local authorities have done, but creating services in innovative ways that everyone can access.

• **Angie Carmichael** was talking to **Annie Makoff**

ANGIE CARMICHAEL: CAREER PATH

- 1980s–1995: Broadcast TV work including assistant producer on Channel 4's *Same Difference*
- 1995: Set up Sparring Partners, making films for charities and voluntary sector
- 1996: Set up Wiltshire People First
- 2001: Coordinated a Best Value review of Direct Payments and Support Services
- 2006: Lay reviewer and referee for the Department of Health Social Care Workforce Research Initiative
- 2008: Co-trainer at *I'm a Person Too*

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2010(60)	Kia Sedona CRDi TS, A/C, Full L. Floor,	£26,995

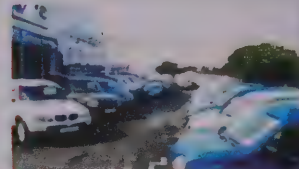
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2004(04)	Citroen Dispatch 5sp, 5 seats, 46,000 mls	£5,995
2004(04)	Renault Master 5sp, 5 seats, Chairlift, 36,000 mls	£9,995
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2008(08)	Renault Master 5sp, A/C, 5 seats, Chairlift, 15,000 mls	£15,995
2008(58)	Fiat New Scudo 5sp, A/C, 5 seats, Low Floor, 28,000 mls	£15,995
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2009(09)	Renault Solus, Drive from Wheelchair, 1,000 miles only	£24,995
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2008 Renault Kangoo 1.6 ltr (J10003) Auto, Petrol, Silver, 3 seats, 6,000 miles, 5 door, Lowered Floor. **£9,450**

2008 Kangoo Sirius 1.6ltr (J10670) Metallic Blue, Auto, Petrol, 3 seats, 3,000 miles, Driver Hand Controls, Drive from wheelchair, Remote controlled rear doors and ramp. **£14,995**



2010 Volkswagen Caddy New SWB Disabled Driver 1.9 TDi Auto (J89991) Silver, Drive from wheelchair car or Upfront w/c passenger; Remote controlled rear door and ramp low floor; Driver hand controls fitted. **£24,995**

2006 Volkswagen Caddy Combi SWB Brotherwood 1.9TDi (J10607) Metallic Paint, 4 Seats, 45,000 miles, Ramp. **£11,995**

2007 Citroen C8 2.0i Exclusive Cirrus (J10858) Metallic Blue, 4 Seats, 18,000 miles, Lowered Floor. **£16,995**



2006 Fiat Doblo Aspen 1.3 Multijet Turbo Diesel (J10626) Blue, 3 Seats, 19,000 miles, 5 doors, Full Width Ramp, Lowered Floor. **£7,995**

2005 Renault Master SWB 2.5 Turbo Diesel (J10944) Silver, Manual, 39,000 miles, Electric Wheelchair Lift. **£8,850**

2005 Toyota Hi-Ace SWB 2.5 ltr Turbo Diesel (J10860) Silver, 4 Seats, Manual, 60,000 miles, Side load door, Single front passenger seat. **£6,995**



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RECRUITMENT

ALLIANCE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Oral History Volunteers Needed

ALLFIE is looking for 10 disabled people based in London to be Oral History volunteers to carry out the oral history interviews in our project:

What Did you Learn at School Today? - 100 years of disabled people's education.

The project will explore and record the social and cultural importance of the history of disabled people's education. This is a two year project, beginning in June 2011 and ending in 2013, and will culminate in a website, schools resource pack, public archive and exhibition. Training and supervision for the role will be given.

If you are interested in becoming an oral history volunteer, please send a short covering statement to Tara Flood at the ALLFIE office: Tel: 020 7737 6030 or email: tara.flood@allfie.org.uk

We are also keen to hear from disabled people who are willing to have their story recorded. For more information please contact us at the ALLFIE office (as above).



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(www.vassallcentre.org) seeks an

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RECRUITMENT

Chair of Equality 2025

£40,000 pa + expenses
(non-specific location)
2 days a week

Equality 2025 is a Non-Departmental Public Body, comprising 10, (9 members and a Chair) publicly appointed disabled people. The group works across Government to offer Ministers and senior government officials strategic advice at the very early stages of policy development on issues that affect disabled people, as well as providing in-depth examinations of new or existing policy areas. Equality 2025 is not a campaigning organisation.

We are recruiting to this role following the death of Rowen Jade in September.

In order to apply, you must be a disabled person.

You will lead Equality 2025 to continue to build strong relationships with Ministers and officials to provide confidential advice and influence how policies affecting disabled people are developed.

For this key role, you will need a range of skills, including:

- an in depth understanding of the experiences and barriers faced by disabled people
- experience of working with Government at a local or national level and an understanding of how policy is developed
- strong negotiating and influencing skills
- the ability to gain the trust of Ministers and officials whilst providing independent and confidential advice
- experience of chairing meetings or committee structures
- the ability to set realistic agendas and develop consensus while respecting diverse views
- excellent strategy development and work / project planning skills
- credibility and good networks in the disability field

Can you lead this influential group? If so, visit our website at: www.odi.gov.uk/equality-2025 for further information. Alternatively you can contact the Equality 2025 Secretariat on **07776 171309** (Monday-Friday 2-4pm,) or email eq2025.secretariat@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.

This advertisement and the application pack are available in other formats.

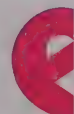
The closing date for applications is 21st January 2011 at 10.00am.



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equality 2025
Working with government
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DN DEADLINE

February 2011 published 27 January. Classified deadlines: Booking: 4 January. Copy: 7 January

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backlash



Not quite Torvill and Dean

The recent big freeze not only brought much of Britain to a standstill, it also turned **Paul Carter** into a reluctant comedy skater

Firstly, if you're reading this, congratulations. You've obviously survived the onset of the second ice age. I'm not quite sure what the hell winter thinks it's doing attacking us disableds at this time, it's not like we don't have enough to deal with already is it?

I'm about as effective on ice as an England World Cup bid delegation, so this time of year always leads to much more grumbling, whingeing and general mardy-arseness than usual.

It's the constant unbalanced state that I struggle with the most, and I'm not only referring to my mental state. When I'm not falling over, I'm nearly falling over, which in some ways is worse. It's like being permanently drunk but without the good bits.

I don't like falling over, except when I see other people do it, so I'm taking extra precautions this year to outwit my icy nemesis. Firstly, I've resorted to dressing like the Michelin man, by wearing as many layers as I can feasibly squeeze into. Not for



“I have to follow the bits that look like they have already been walked on, even if that means taking frankly preposterous detours around trees, bins, parked cars, or in one instance, an active dustcart”

temperature purposes you understand, but purely to provide extra padding for the inevitable crashes to the ground that will occur. I should probably think of investing in some sort of

prosthetic spikes.

Anyone who follows my tracks from walking across the icy tundra that is the estate I live on would think I've been on the Special Brew. I have to follow the bits that look like they have already been walked or driven on, even if that means taking frankly preposterous detours around trees, bins, parked cars, or in one instance, an active dustcart. Kerbs pose a whole new challenge too, as they can't be negotiated without something to lean on, as the poxy ice can't be trusted, so my mental map ends up looking like something Columbus would have plotted on his journey

to the Americas. Except I'm not going to the Americas, I'm going to the Happy Shopper for some bread.

I even did that thing the other day that you sometimes see in slapstick comedy films – you know, where someone's legs are running but because they're on a patch of ice they stay in the same place. That. It gets a bit exhausting after a while though. It was only the friction caused by my quite horrifying leg speed that caused the ice underneath to melt that saved me. At first I thought I was going to be there for days. Condemned to death by running, what a hideous way to go. On that note, merry Christmas.

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